

SCIENCE FICTION

STORIES

New Stories by

POUL ANDERSON

RAYMOND Z. GALLUM

ROBERT SHECHLEY

JEROME BIXBY

ALAN BLOOM

PHILIP K. DICK

ROB L. EMMETT

JOHN W. CAMP

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Author! Author!

POUL ANDERSON Since his first appearance, in 1947, Poul Anderson has been a regular contributor to all the leading science fiction magazines, and has recently been writing topnotch fantasy tales as well. A number of his stories have been selected for science fiction anthologies, notably, "The Double-Dyed Villains" and "The Helping Hand." His novel, "Vault of the Ages," appeared last year in the popular series of science fiction novels issued by the John C. Winston Company.

JEROME BIXBY Better known as an editor than a writer, Jerome Bixby is remembered for his yeoman work in raising the standards of the science fiction adventure story. His stories, though few, are much sought after by discriminating editors, since they first started to appear in 1949.

ALGIS BUDRYS Working both as an author and an editorial assistant, Algis Budrys has, within the short period of a year and a half become one of the most promising of the new crop of "name writers" in the science fiction field. One reason for this is that his stories combine sound, scientific speculation with warm, believable characterization in a manner worthy of the best traditions in the field.

PHILIP K. DICK Another comparative newcomer to science fiction, Philip K. Dick (whose first story appeared in 1952) has nonetheless made his mark, and is in constant demand. His talents also run to whimsical fantasy, as can be seen by the story presented here, and in such tales as "The World She Wanted," which appeared this year.

RAYMOND Z. GALLUN Science fiction has changed considerably since 1929, when Raymond Z. Gallun's first story appeared. The sugar-coated scientific lectures, the flat chronologies of future catastrophies, the mad scientists and grisly, monstrous invaders are things of the past, relegated to the comics when they appear at all. Stories are now about people; but Mr. Gallun's strong point has always been his characters (human or non-human) set in unworldly situations, so he has not had to change his ways too much in order to compete with improved standards. This is attested to by the number of his stories, old and new, which have been included in anthologies as representative of first-class science fiction.

(Continued on third cover)

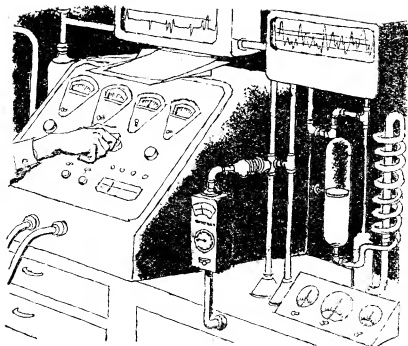
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STORIES

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The way we feel about another person, or about objects, is often bound up in associations that have no direct connection with the person or object at all. Often, what we call a "change of heart" comes about sheerly from a change in the many associations which make up our present viewpoint. Now, suppose that these associations could be altered artificially, at the option of the person who was in charge of the process . . .

Sentiment, Inc.

by POUL ANDERSON

SHE was twenty-two years old, fresh out of college, full of life and hope, and all set to conquer the world. Colin Fraser happened to be on vacation on Cape Cod, where she was playing summer stock, and went to more shows than he had planned. It wasn't hard to

get an introduction, and before long he and Judy Sanders were seeing a lot of each other.

"Of course," she told him one afternoon on the beach, "my real name is Harkness."

He raised his arm, letting the sand run through his fingers. The beach was big and dazzling white around them, the sea galloped in with a steady roar, and a gull rode the breeze overhead. "What was wrong with it?" he asked. "For a professional monicker, I mean."

She laughed and shook the long hair back over her shoulders. "I wanted to live under the name of Sanders," she explained.

"Oh — oh, yes, of course. Winnie the Pooh." He grinned. "Soulmates, that's what we are." It was about then that he decided he'd been a bachelor long enough.

In the fall she went to New York to begin the upward grind — understudy, walk-on parts, shoestring-theaters, and roles in outright turkeys. Fraser returned to Boston for awhile, but his work suffered, he had to keep dashing off to see her.

By spring she was beginning to get places; she had talent and everybody enjoys looking at a brown-eyed blonde. His weekly proposals were also beginning to show some real progress, and he thought that a month or two of steady siege might finish the campaign. So he took leave from his job and went down to New York himself. He'd saved up enough money, and was good enough in his work, to afford it; anyway, he was his own boss — consulting engineer, specializing in mathematical analysis.

He got a furnished room in Brooklyn, and filled in his leisure time — as he thought of it — with some special math courses at Columbia. And he had a lot of friends in town, in a curious variety of professions. Next to Judy, he saw most of the physicist Sworsky, who was an entertaining companion though most of his work was too top-secret even to be mentioned. It was a happy period.

There is always a jarring note, to be sure. In this case, it was the fact that Fraser had plenty of competition. He wasn't good-looking himself — a tall gaunt man of twenty-eight, with a dark hatchet face and perpetually-rumpled clothes. But still, Judy saw more of him than of anyone else, and admitted she was seriously considering his proposal and no other.

He called her up once for a date. "Sorry," she answered. "I'd love to, Colin, but I've already promised tonight. Just so you won't worry, it's Matthew Snyder."

"Hm — the industrialist?"

"Uh-huh. He asked me in such a way it was hard to refuse. But I don't think you have to be jealous, honey. 'Bye now.'"

Fraser lit his pipe with a certain smugness. Snyder was several times a millionaire, but he was close to sixty, a widower of notably dull conversation. Judy wasn't— Well, no worries, as she'd said. He dropped over to Sworsky's apartment for an evening of chess and bull-shooting.

IT WAS early in May, when the world was turning green again, that Judy called Fraser up. "Hi," she said breathlessly. "Busy tonight?"

"Well, I was hoping I'd be, if you get what I mean," he said.

"Look, I want to take you out for a change. Just got some unexpected money and dammit, I want to feel rich for one evening."

"Hmmm —" He scowled into the phone. "I dunno —"

"Oh, get off it, Galahad. I'll meet you in the Dixie lobby at seven. Okay?" She blew him a kiss over the wires, and hung up before he could argue further. He sighed and shrugged. Why not, if she wanted to?

They were in a little Hungarian restaurant, with a couple of Tzigani strolling about playing for them alone, it seemed, when he asked for details. "Did you get a bonus, or what?"

"No." She laughed at him over her drink. "I've turned guinea pig."

"I hope you quit *that* job before we're married!"

"It's a funny deal," she said thoughtfully. "It'd interest you. I've been out a couple of times with this Snyder, you know, and if anything was needed to drive me into your arms, Colin, it's his political lectures."

"Well, bless the Republican Party!" He laid his hand over hers, she didn't withdraw it, but she frowned just a little.

"Colin, you know I want to get somewhere before I marry — see a bit of the world, the theatrical world, before turning hausfrau. Don't be so — Oh, never mind. I like you anyway."

Sipping her drink and setting it down again: "Well, to carry on with the story. I finally gave Comrade Snyder the complete brush-off, and I must say he took it very nicely. But today, this morning, he called asking me to have lunch with him, and I did after he explained. It seems he's got a psychiatrist friend doing research, measuring brain storms or something, and — Do I mean storms? Waves, I guess. Anyway, he wants to measure as many different kinds of people as possible, and Snyder had suggested me. I was supposed to come in for three afternoons run-

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ning — about two hours each time — and I'd get a hundred dollars per session."

"Hm," said Fraser. "I didn't know psych research was that well-heeled. Who is this mad scientist?"

"His name is Kennedy. Oh, by the way, I'm not supposed to tell anybody; they want to spring it on the world as a surprise or something. But you're different, Colin. I'm excited; I want to talk to somebody about it."

"Sure," he said. "You had a session already?"

"Yes, my first was today. It's a funny place to do research — Kennedy's got a big suite on Fifth Avenue, right up in the classy district. Beautiful office. The name of his outfit is Sentiment, Inc."

"Hm. Why should a research-team take such a name? Well, go on."

"Oh, there isn't much else to tell. Kennedy was very nice. He took me into a laboratory full of all sorts of dials and meters and blinking lights and es — what do you call them? Those things that make wiggly pictures."

"Oscilloscopes. You'll never make a scientist, my dear."

She grinned. "But I know one scientist who'd like to — Never mind! Anyway, he sat me down in a chair and put bands around my wrists and ankles — just like the hot squat — and a big thing like a beauty-parlor hair-drier over my head. Then he fiddled with his dials for awhile, making notes. Then he started saying words at me, and showing me pictures. Some of them were very pretty; some ugly; some funny; some downright horrible . . . Anyway, that's all there was to it. After a couple of hours he gave me a check for a hundred dollars and told me to come back tomorrow."

"Hm." Fraser rubbed his chin. "Apparently he was measuring the electric rhythms corresponding to pleasure and dislike. I'd no idea anybody'd made an encephalograph that accurate."

"Well," said Judy, "I've told you why we're celebrating. Now come on, the regular orchestra's tuning up. Let's dance."

They had a rather wonderful evening. Afterward Fraser lay awake for a long time, not wanting to lose a state of happiness in sleep. He considered sleep a hideous waste of time: if he lived to be ninety, he'd have spent almost thirty years unconscious.

JUDY was engaged for the next couple of evenings, and Fraser himself was invited to dinner at Sworsky's the night after that. So it wasn't till the end of the week that he called her again.

"Hullo, sweetheart," he said exuberantly. "How's things? I refer to Charles Addams Things, of course."

"Oh — Colin." Her voice was very small, and it trembled.

"Look, I've got two tickets to *H. M. S. Pinafore*. So put on your own pinafore and meet me."

"Colin — I'm sorry, Colin. I can't."

"Huh?" He noticed how odd she sounded, and a leadenness grew within him. "You aren't sick, are you?"

"Colin, I — I'm going to be married."

"What?"

"Yes. I'm in love now; really in love. I'll be getting married in a couple of months."

"But — but —"

"I didn't want to hurt you." He heard her begin to cry.

"But who — how —"

"It's Matthew," she gulped. "Matthew Snyder."

He sat quiet for a long while, until she asked if he was still on the line. "Yeah," he said tonelessly. "Yeah, I'm still here, after a fashion." Shaking himself: "Look, I've got to see you. I want to talk to you."

"I can't."

"You sure as hell can," he said harshly.

They met at a quiet little bar which had often been their rendezvous. She watched him with frightened eyes while he ordered martinis.

"All right," he said at last. "What's the story?"

"I —" He could barely hear her. "There isn't any story. I suddenly realized I loved Matt. That's all."

"Snyder!" He made it a curse. "Remember what you told me about him before?"

"I felt different then," she whispered. "He's a wonderful man when you get to know him."

And rich. He suppressed the words and the thought. "What's so wonderful specifically?" he asked.

"He —" Briefly, her face was rapt. Fraser had seen her looking at him that way, now and then.

"Go on," he said grimly. "Enumerate Mr. Snyder's good qualities. Make a list. He's courteous, cultured, intelligent, young, handsome, amusing — To hell! Why, Judy?"

"I don't know," she said in a high, almost fearful tone. "I just love him, that's all." She reached over the table and stroked his cheek. "I like you a lot, Colin. Find yourself a nice girl and be happy."

His mouth drew into a narrow line. "There's something funny here," he said. "Is it blackmail?"

"No!" She stood up, spilling her drink, and the flare of temper showed him how overwrought she was. "He just happens to be the man I love. That's enough out of you, good-bye, Mr. Fraser."

He sat watching her go. Presently he took up his drink; gulped it barbarously, and called for another.

2

JUAN MARTINEZ had come from Puerto Rico as a boy and made his own way ever since. Fraser had gotten to know him in the army, and they had seen each other from time to time since then. Martinez had gone into the private-eye business and made a good thing of it; Fraser had to get past a very neat-looking receptionist to see him.

"Hi, Colin," said Martinez, shaking hands. He was a small, dark man, with a large nose and beady black eyes that made him resemble a sympathetic mouse. "You look like the very devil."

"I feel that way, too," said Fraser, collapsing into a chair. "You can't go on a three-day drunk without showing it."

"Well, what's the trouble? Cigarette?" Martinez held out a pack. "Girl-friend give you the air?"

"As a matter of fact, yes; that's what I want to see you about."

"This isn't a lonely-hearts club," said Martinez. "And I've told you time and again a private dick isn't a wisecracking superman. Our work is ninety-nine percent routine; and for the other one percent, we call in the police."

"Let me give you the story," said Fraser. He rubbed his eyes wearily as he told it. At the end, he sat staring at the floor.

"Well," said Martinez, "it's too bad and all that. But what the hell, there are other dames. New York has more beautiful women per square inch than any other city except Paris. Latch on to somebody else. Or if you want, I can give you a phone number —"

"You don't understand," said Fraser. "I want you to investigate this; I want to know why she did it."

Martinez squinted through a haze of smoke. "Snyder's a rich and powerful man," he said. "Isn't that enough?"

"No," said Fraser, too tired to be angry at the hint. "Judy isn't that kind of a girl. Neither is she the kind to go overboard in a few days,

especially when I was there. Sure, that sounds conceited, but dammit, I *know* she cared for me."

"Okay. You suspect pressure was brought to bear?"

"Yeah. It's hard to imagine what. I called up Judy's family in Maine, and they said they were all right, no worries. Nor do I think anything in her own life would give a blackmailer or an extortionist anything to go on. Still — I want to know."

Martinez drummed the desk-top with nervous fingers. "I'll look into it if you insist," he said, "though it'll cost you a pretty penny. Rich men's lives aren't easy to pry into if they've got something they want to hide. But I don't think we'd find out much; your case seems to be only one of a rash of similar ones in the past year."

"Huh?" Fraser looked sharply up.

"Yeah. I follow all the news; and remember the odd facts. There've been a good dozen cases recently, where beautiful young women suddenly married rich men or became their mistresses. It doesn't all get into the papers, but I've got my contacts. I know. In every instance, there was no obvious reason; in fact, the dames seemed very much in love with daddy."

"And the era of the gold-digger is pretty well gone —" Fraser sat staring out the window. It didn't seem right that the sky should be so full of sunshine.

"Well," said Martinez, "you don't need me. You need a psychologist." *Psychologist!*

"By God, Juan, I'm going to give you a job anyway!" Fraser leaped to his feet. "You're going to check into an outfit called Sentiment, Inc."

A WEEK later, Martinez said, "Yeah, we found it easily enough. It's not in the phone-book, but they've got a big suite right in the high-rent district on Fifth. The address is here, in my written report. Nobody in the building knows much about 'em, except that they're a quiet, well-behaved bunch and call themselves research psychologists. They have a staff of four: a secretary-receptionist; a full-time secretary; and a couple of husky boys who may be bodyguards for the boss. That's this Kennedy, Robert Kennedy. My man couldn't get into his office; the girl said he was too busy and never saw anybody except some regular clients. Nor could he date either of the girls, but he did investigate them.

"The receptionist is just a working girl for routine stuff, married,

hardly knows or cares what's going on. The steno is unmarried, has a degree in psych, lives alone, and seems to have no friends except her boss. Who's not her lover, by the way."

"Well, how about Kennedy himself?" asked Fraser.

"I've found out a good bit, but it's all legitimate," said Martinez. "He's about fifty years old, a widower, very steady private life. He's a licensed psychiatrist who used to practice in Chicago, where he also did research in collaboration with a physicist named Gavotti, who's since died. Shortly after that happened —

"No, there's no suspicion of foul play; the physicist was an old man and died of a heart attack. Anyway, Kennedy moved to New York. He still practices, officially, but he doesn't take just anybody; claims that his research only leaves him time for a few." Martinez narrowed his eyes. "The only thing you could hold against him is that he occasionally sees a guy named Bryce, who's in a firm that has some dealings with Amtorg."

"The Russian trading corporation? Hm."

"Oh, that's pretty remote guilt by association, Colin. Amtorg does have legitimate business, you know. We buy manganese from them, among other things. And the rest of Kennedy's connections are all strictly blue ribbon. *Crème de la crème* — business, finance, politics, and one big union-leader who's known to be a conservative. In fact, Kennedy's friends are so powerful you'd have real trouble doing anything against him."

Fraser slumped in his chair. "I suppose my notion was pretty wild," he admitted.

"Well, there is one queer angle. You know these rich guys who've suddenly made out with such highly desirable dames? As far as I could find out, every one of them is a client of Kennedy's."

"Eh?" Fraser jerked erect.

"S a fact. Also, my man showed the building staff, elevator pilots and so on, pictures of these women, and a couple of 'em were remembered as having come to see Kennedy."

"Shortly before they — fell in love?"

"Well, that I can't be sure of. You know how people are about remembering dates. But it's possible."

Fraser shook his dark head. "It's unbelievable," he said. "I thought Svengali was outworn melodrama."

"I know something about hypnotism, Colin. It won't do anything like what you think happened to those girls."

Fraser got out his pipe and fumbled tobacco into it. "I think," he said, "I'm going to call on Dr. Robert Kennedy myself."

"Take it easy, boy," said Martinez. "You been reading too many weird stories; you'll just get tossed out on your can."

Fraser tried to smile. It was hard — Judy wouldn't answer his calls and letters any more. "Well," he said, "it'll be in a worthy cause."

THE elevator let him out on the nineteenth floor. It held four big suites, with the corridor running between them. He studied the frosted-glass doors. On one side was the Eagle Publishing Company and Frank & Dayles, Brokers. On the other was the Messenger Advertising Service, and Sentiment, Inc. He entered their door and stood in a quiet, oak-paneled reception room. Behind the railing were a couple of desks, a young woman working at each, and two burly men who sat boredly reading magazines.

The pretty girl, obviously the receptionist, looked up as Fraser approached and gave him a professional smile. "Yes, sir?" she asked.

"I'd like to see Dr. Kennedy, please," he said, trying hard to be casual.

"Do you have an appointment, sir?"

"No, but it's urgent."

"I'm sorry, sir; Dr. Kennedy is very busy. He can't see anybody except his regular patients and research subjects."

"Look, take him in this note, will you? Thanks."

Fraser sat uneasily for some minutes, wondering if he'd worded the note correctly. *I must see you about Miss Judy Harkness. Important.* Well, what the devil else could you say?

The receptionist came out again. "Dr. Kennedy can spare you a few minutes, sir," she said. "Go right on in."

"Thanks." Fraser slouched toward the inner door. The two men lowered their magazines to follow him with watchful eyes.

There was a big, handsomely-furnished office inside, with a door beyond that must lead to the laboratory. Kennedy looked up from some papers and rose, holding out his hand. He was a medium-sized man, rather plump, graying hair brushed thickly back from a broad, heavy face behind rimless glasses. "Yes?" His voice was low and pleasant. "What can I do for you?"

"My name's Fraser." The visitor sat down and accepted a cigarette. Best to act urbanely. "I know Miss Harkness well. I understand you made some encephalographic studies of her."

"Indeed?" Kennedy looked annoyed, and Fraser recalled that Judy had been asked not to tell anyone. "I'm not sure; I would have to consult my records first." He wasn't admitting anything, thought Fraser.

"Look," said the engineer, "there's been a marked change in Miss Harkness recently. I know enough psychology to be certain that such changes don't happen overnight without cause. I wanted to consult you."

"I'm not her psychiatrist," said Kennedy coldly. "Now if you will excuse me, I really have a lot to do —"

"All right," said Fraser. There was no menace in his tones, only a weariness. "If you insist, I'll play it dirty. Such abrupt changes indicate mental instability. But I know she was perfectly sane before. It begins to look as if your experiments may have — injured her mind. If so, I should have to report you for malpractice."

Kennedy flushed. "I am a licensed psychiatrist," he said, "and any other doctor will confirm that Miss Harkness is still in mental health. If you tried to get an investigation started, you would only be wasting your own time and that of the authorities. She herself will testify that no harm was done to her; no compulsion applied; and that you are an infernal busybody with some delusions of your own. Good afternoon."

"Ah," said Fraser, "so she was here."

Kennedy pushed a button. His men entered. "Show this gentleman the way out, please," he said.

Fraser debated whether to put up a fight, decided it was futile, and went out between the two others. When he got to the street, he found he was shaking, and badly in need of a drink.

FRASER asked, "Jim, did you ever read *Trilby*?"

Sworsky's round, freckled face lifted to regard him. "Years ago," he answered. "What of it?"

"Tell me something. Is it possible — even theoretically possible — to do what Svengali did? Change emotional attitudes, just like that." Fraser snapped his fingers.

"I don't know," said Sworsky. "Nuclear cross-sections are more in my line. But offhand, I should imagine it might be done . . . sometime in the far future. Thought-habits, associational-patterns, the labeling of this as good and that as bad, seem to be matters of established neural paths. If you could selectively alter the polarization of individual neurones — But it's a pretty remote prospect; we hardly know a thing about the brain today."

He studied his friend sympathetically. "I know it's tough to get jilted," he said, "but don't go off your trolley about it."

"I could stand it if someone else had gotten her in the usual kind of way," said Fraser thinly. "But this — Look, let me tell you all I've found out."

Sworsky shook his head at the end of the story. "That's a mighty wild speculation," he murmured. "I'd forget it if I were you."

"Did you know Kennedy's old partner? Gavotti, at Chicago."

"Sure, I met him a few times. Nice old guy, very unworldly, completely wrapped up in his work. He got interested in neurology from the physics angle toward the end of his life, and contributed a lot to cybernetics. What of it?"

"I don't know," said Fraser; "I just don't know. But do me a favor, will you, Jim? Judy won't see me at all, but she knows you and likes you. Ask her to dinner or something. Insist that she come. Then you and your wife find out — whatever you can. Just exactly how she feels about the whole business. What her attitudes are toward everything."

"The name is Sworsky, not Holmes. But sure, I'll do what I can, if you'll promise to try and get rid of this fixation. You ought to see a head-shrinker yourself, you know."

In vino veritas — sometimes too damn much *veritas*.

TOWARD the end of the evening, Judy was talking freely, if not quite coherently. "I cared a lot for Colin," she said. "It was pretty wonderful having him around. He's a grand guy. Only Matt — I don't know. Matt hasn't got half of what Colin has; Matt's a single-track mind. I'm afraid I'm just going to be an ornamental convenience to him. Only if you've ever been so you got all dizzy when someone was around, and thought about him all the time he was away — well, that's how he is. Nothing else matters."

"Colin's gotten a funny obsession," said Sworsky cautiously. "He thinks Kennedy hypnotized you for Snyder. I keep telling him it's impossible, but he can't get over the idea."

"Oh, no, no, no," she said with too much fervor. "It's nothing like that. I'll tell you just what happened. We had those two measuring sessions; it was kind of dull but nothing else. And then the third time Kennedy did put me under hypnosis — he called it that, at least. I went to sleep and woke up about an hour later and he sent me home. I felt all good inside, happy, and shlo — slowly I began to see what Matt meant to me."

"I called him up that evening. He said Kennedy's machine *did* speed up people's minds for a short while, sometimes, so they decided quick-like what they'd've worked out anyway. Kennedy is — I don't know. It's funny how ordinary he seemed at first. But when you get to know him, he's like — God, almost. He's strong and wise and good. He —" Her voice trailed off and she sat looking foolishly at her glass.

"You know," said Sworsky, "perhaps Colin is right after all."

"Don't say that!" She jumped up and slapped his face. "Kennedy's good, I tell you! All you little lice sitting here making sly remarks behind his back, and he's so much bigger than all of you and —" She broke into tears and stormed out of the apartment.

Sworsky reported the affair to Fraser. "I wonder," he said. "It doesn't seem natural, I'll agree. But what can anybody do? The police?"

"I've tried," said Fraser dully. "They laughed. When I insisted, I damn near got myself juggled. That's no use. The trouble is, none of the people who've been under the machine will testify against Kennedy. He fixes it so they worship him."

"I still think you're crazy. There *must* be a simpler hypothesis; I refuse to believe your screwy notions without some real evidence. But what are you going to do now?"

"Well," said Fraser with a tautness in his voice, "I've got several thousand dollars saved up, and Juan Martinez will help. Ever hear the fable about the lion? He licked hell out of the bear and the tiger and the rhinoceros, but a little gnat finally drove him nuts. Maybe I can be the gnat." He shook his head. "But I'll have to hurry. The wedding's only six weeks off."

3

IT CAN be annoying to be constantly shadowed; to have nasty gossip about you spreading through the places where you work and live; to find your tires slashed; to be accosted by truculent drunks when you stop in for a quick one; to have loud horns blow under your window every night. And it doesn't do much good to call the police; your petty tormentors always fade out of sight.

Fraser was sitting in his room some two weeks later, trying unsuccessfully to concentrate on matrix algebra, when the phone rang. He never picked it up without a fluttering small hope that it might be Judy, and it never was. This time it was a man's voice: "Mr. Fraser?"

"Yeah," he grunted. "Wha'dya want?"

"This is Robert Kennedy. I'd like to talk to you."

Fraser's heart sprang in his ribs, but he held his voice stiff. "Go on, then. Talk."

"I want you to come up to my place. We may be having a long conversation."

"Mmmm — well —" It was more than he had allowed himself to hope for, but he remained curt: "Okay. But a full report of this business, and what I think you're doing, is in the hands of several people. If anything should happen to me —"

"You've been reading too many hard-boileds," said Kennedy. "Nothing will happen. Anyway, I have a pretty good idea who those people are; I can hire detectives of my own, you know."

"I'll come over, then." Fraser hung up and realized, suddenly, that he was sweating.

The night air was cool as he walked down the street. He paused for a moment, feeling the city like a huge impersonal machine around him, grinding and grinding. Human civilization had grown too big, he thought. It was beyond anyone's control; it had taken on a will of its own and was carrying a race which could no longer guide it. Sometimes — reading the papers, or listening to the radio, or just watching the traffic go by like a river of steel — a man could feel horribly helpless.

He took the subway to Kennedy's address, a swank apartment in the lower Fifties. He was admitted by the psychiatrist in person; no one else was around.

"I assume," said Kennedy, "that you don't have some wild idea of pulling a gun on me. That would accomplish nothing except to get you in trouble."

"No," said Fraser, "I'll be good." His eyes wandered about the living room. One wall was covered with books which looked used; there were some quality reproductions, a Capehart, and fine, massive furniture. It was a tasteful layout. He looked a little more closely at three pictures on the mantel: a middle-aged woman and two young men in uniform.

"My wife," said Kennedy, "and my boys. They're all dead. Would you like a drink?"

"No. I came to talk."

"I'm not Satan, you know," said Kennedy. "I like books and music, good wine, good conversation. I'm as human as you are, only I have a purpose."

Fraser sat down and began charging his pipe. "Go ahead," he said. "I'm listening."

Kennedy pulled a chair over to face him. The big smooth countenance behind the rimless glasses held little expression. "Why have you been annoying me?" he asked.

"I?" Fraser lifted his brows.

Kennedy made an impatient gesture. "Let's not chop words. There are no witnesses tonight. I intend to talk freely, and want you to do the same. I know that you've got Martinez sufficiently convinced to help you with this very childish persecution-campaign. What do you hope to get out of it?"

"I want my girl back," said Fraser tonelessly. "I was hoping my nuisance-value —"

KENNEDY winced a bit. "You know, I'm damned sorry about that. It's the one aspect of my work which I hate. I'd like you to believe that I'm not just a scientific procurer. Actually, I have to satisfy the minor desires of my clients, so they'll stay happy and agree to my major wishes. It's the plain truth that those women have been only the minutest fraction of my job."

"Nevertheless, you're a free-wheeling son, doing something like that —"

"Really, now, what's so horrible about it? Those girls are in love — the normal, genuine article. It's not any kind of zombie state, or whatever your overheated imagination has thought up. They're entirely sane, unharmed, and happy. In fact, happiness of that kind is so rare in this world that if I wanted to, I could pose as their benefactor."

"You've got a machine," said Fraser; "it changes the mind. As far as I'm concerned, that's as gross a violation of liberty as throwing somebody into a concentration camp."

"How free do you think anyone is? You're born with a fixed heredity. Environment molds you like clay. Your society teaches you what and how to think. A million tiny factors, all depending on blind, uncontrollable chance, determine the course of your life — including your love-life.... Well, we needn't waste any time on philosophy. Go on, ask some questions. I admit I've hurt you — unwittingly, to be sure — but I do want to make amends."

"Your machine, then," said Fraser. "How did you get it? How does it work?"

"I was practicing in Chicago," said Kennedy, "and collaborating on the side with Gavotti. How much do you know of cybernetics? I don't mean computers and automata, which are only one aspect of the

field; I mean control and communication, in the animal as well as in the machine."

"Well, I've read Wiener's books, and studied Shannon's work, too." Despite himself, Fraser was thawing, just a trifle. "It's exciting stuff. Communications-theory seems to be basic, in biology and psychology as well as in electronics."

"Quite. The future may remember Wiener as the Galileo of neurology. If Gavotti's work ever gets published, he'll be considered the Newton. So far, frankly, I've suppressed it. He died suddenly, just when his machine was completed and he was getting ready to publish his results. Nobody but I knew anything more than rumors; he was inclined to be secretive till he had a *fait accompli* on hand. I realized what an opportunity had been given me, and took it; I brought the machine here without saying much to anyone."

Kennedy leaned back in his chair. "I imagine it was mostly luck which took Gavotti and me so far," he went on. "We made a long series of improbably good guesses, and thus telescoped a century of work into a decade. If I were religious, I'd be down on my knees, thanking the Lord for putting this thing of the future into my hands."

"Or the devil," said Fraser.

Briefly, anger flitted across Kennedy's face. "I grant you, the machine is a terrible power, but it's harmless to a man if it's used properly — as I have used it. I'm not going to tell you just how it works; to be perfectly honest, I only understand a fraction of its theory and its circuits myself. But look, you know something of encephalography. The various basic rhythms of the brain have been measured. The standard method is already so sensitive that it can detect abnormalities like a developing tumor or a strong emotional disturbance, that will give trouble unless corrected. Half of Gavotti's machine is a still more delicate encephalograph. It can measure and analyze the minute variations in electrical pulses corresponding to the basic emotional states. It won't read thoughts, no; but once calibrated for a given individual, it will tell you if he's happy, sorrowful, angry, disgusted, afraid — any fundamental neuro-glandular condition, or any combination of them."

He paused. "All right," said Fraser. "What else does it do?"

"It does *not* make monsters," said Kennedy. "Look, the specific emotional reaction to a given stimulus is, in the normal individual, largely a matter of conditioned reflex, instilled by social environment or the accidental associations of his life.

"Anyone in decent health will experience fear in the presence of

danger; desire in the presence of a sexual object, and so on. That's basic biology, and the machine can't change that. But most of our evaluations are learned. For instance, to an American the word 'mother' has powerful emotional connotations, while to a Samoan it means nothing very exciting. You had to develop a taste for liquor, tobacco, coffee — in fact most of what you consume. If you're in love with a particular woman, it's a focusing of the general sexual libido on her, brought about by the symbolizing part of your mind: she *means* something to you. There are cultures without romantic love, you know. And so on. All these specific, conditioned reactions can be changed."

"How?"

KENNEDY thought for a moment. "The encephalographic part of the machine measures the exact pulsations in the individual corresponding to the various emotional reactions. It takes me about four hours to determine those with the necessary precision; then I have to make statistical analyses of the data, to winnow out random variations. Thereafter I put the subject in a state of light hypnosis — that's only to increase suggestibility, and make the process faster. As I pronounce the words and names I'm interested in, the machine feeds back the impulses corresponding to the emotions I want: a sharply-focused beam on the brain center concerned.

"For instance, suppose you were an alcoholic and I wanted to cure you. I'd put you in hypnosis and stand there whispering 'wine, whisky, beer, gin,' and so on; meanwhile, the machine would be feeding the impulses corresponding to your reactions of hate, fear, and disgust into your brain. You'd come out unchanged, except that your appetite for alcohol would be gone; you could, in fact, come out hating the stuff so much that you'd join the Prohibition Party — though, in actual practice, it would probably be enough just to give you a mild aversion."

"Mmmm — I see. Maybe." Fraser scowled. "And the — subject — doesn't remember what you've done?"

"Oh, no. It all takes place on the lower subconscious levels. A new set of conditioned neural pathways is opened, you see, and old ones are closed off. The brain does that by itself, through its normal symbolizing mechanism. All that happens is that the given symbol — such as liquor — becomes reflectively associated with the given emotional state, such as dislike."

Kennedy leaned forward with an air of urgency. "The end result is in no way different from ordinary means of persuasion. Propa-

ganda does the same thing by sheer repetition. If you're courting a girl, you try to identify yourself in her mind with the things she desires, by appropriate behavior . . . I'm sorry; I shouldn't have used that example . . . The machine is only a direct, fast way of doing this, producing a more stable result."

"It's still — tampering," said Fraser. "How do you know you're not creating side-effects, doing irreparable long-range damage?"

"Oh, for Lord's sake!" exploded Kennedy. "Take your mind off that shelf, will you? I've told you how delicate the whole thing is. A few microwatts of power more or less, a frequency-shift of less than one percent, and it doesn't work at all. There's no effect whatsoever." He cooled off fast, adding reflectively: "On the given subject, that is. It might work on someone else. These pulsations are a highly individual matter; I have to calibrate every case separately."

There was a long period of silence. Then Fraser strained forward and said in an ugly voice:

"All right. You've told me how you do it. Now tell me why. What possible reason or excuse, other than your own desire to play God? This thing could be the greatest psychiatric tool in history, and you're using it to — pimp!"

"I told you that was unimportant," said Kennedy quietly. "I'm doing much more. I set up in practice here in New York a couple of years ago. Once I had a few chance people under control — no, I tell you again, I didn't make robots of them. I merely associated myself, in their own minds, with the father-image. That's something I do to everyone who comes under the machine, just as a precaution if nothing else. Kennedy is all-wise, all-powerful; Kennedy can do no wrong. It isn't a conscious realization; to the waking mind, I am only a shrewd adviser and a damn swell fellow. But the subconscious mind knows otherwise. It wouldn't let my subjects act against me; it wouldn't even let them want to."

"Well, you see how it goes. I got those first few people to recommend me to certain selected friends, and these in turn recommended me to others. Not necessarily as a psychiatrist; I have variously been a doctor, a counsellor, or merely a research-man looking for data. But I'm building up a group of the people I want. People who'll back me up, who'll follow my advice — not with any knowledge of being dominated, but because the workings of their own subconscious minds will lead them inevitably to think that my advice is the only sound policy to follow and my requests are things any decent man must grant."

"Yeah," said Fraser. "I get it. Big businessmen. Labor-leaders. Politicians. Military men. And Soviet spies!"

KENNEDY nodded. "I have connections with the Soviets; their agents think I'm on their side. But it isn't treason, though I may help them out from time to time.

"That's why I have to do these services for my important clients, such as getting them the women they want — or, what I actually do more often, influencing their competitors and associates. You see, the subconscious mind knows I am all-powerful, but the conscious mind doesn't. It has to be satisfied by occasional proofs that I am invaluable; otherwise conflicts would set in, my men would become unstable and eventually psychotic, and be of no further use to me.

"Of course," he added, almost pedantically, "my men don't know how I persuade these other people — they only know that I do, somehow, and their regard for their own egos, as well as for me, sets up a bloc which prevents them from reasoning out the fact that they themselves are dominated. They're quite content to accept the results of my help, without inquiring further into the means than the easy rationalization that I have a 'persuasive personality.'

"I don't like what I'm doing, Fraser. But it's got to be done."

"You still haven't said *what's* got to be done," answered the engineer coldly.

"I've been given something unbelievable," said Kennedy. His voice was very soft now. "If I'd made it public, can you imagine what would have happened? Psychiatrists would use it, yes; but so would criminals, dictators, power-hungry men of all kinds. Even in this country, I don't think libertarian principles could long survive. It would be too simple —

"And yet it would have been cowardly to break the machine and burn Gavotti's notes. Chance has given me the power to be more than a chip in the river — a river that's rapidly approaching a waterfall, war, destruction, tyranny, no matter who the Pyrrhic victor may be. I'm in a position to do something for the causes in which I believe."

"And what are they?" asked Fraser.

Kennedy gestured at the pictures on the mantel. "Both my sons were killed in the last war. My wife died of cancer — a disease which would be licked now if a fraction of the money spent on armaments had been diverted to research. That brought it home to me; but there are hundreds of millions of people in worse cases. And war isn't the

only evil—there is poverty, oppression, inequality, want and suffering. It could be changed.

"I'm building up my own lobby, you might say. In a few more years, I hope to be the indispensable adviser of all the men who, between them, really run this country. And yes, I have been in touch with Soviet agents — have even acted as a transmitter of stolen information. The basic problem of spying, you know, is not to get the information in the first place as much as to get it to the homeland. Treason? No. I think not. I'm getting my toe-hold in world communism. I already have some of its agents; sooner or later, I'll get to the men who really matter. Then communism will no longer be a menace."

He sighed. "It's a hard row to hoe. It'll take my lifetime, at least; but what else have I got to give my life to?"

Fraser sat quiet. His pipe was cold, he knocked it out and began filling it afresh. The scratching of his match seemed unnaturally loud. "It's too much," he said. "It's too big a job for one man to tackle. The world will stumble along somehow, but you'll just get things into a worse mess."

"I've got to try," said Kennedy.

"And I still want my girl back."

"I can't do that; I need Snyder too much. But I'll make it up to you somehow," Kennedy sighed. "Lord, if you knew how much I've wanted to tell all this!"

With sudden wariness: "Not that it's to be repeated. In fact, you're to lay off me; call off your dogs. Don't try to tell anyone else what I've told you. You'd never be believed and I already have enough power to suppress the story, if you should get it out somehow. And if you give me any more trouble at all, I'll see to it that you — stop."

"Murder?"

"Or commitment to an asylum. I can arrange that too."

Fraser sighed. He felt oddly unexcited, empty, as if the interview had drained him of his last will to resist. He held the pipe loosely in his fingers, letting it go out.

"Ask me a favor," urged Kennedy. "I'll do it, if it won't harm my own program. I tell you, I want to square things."

"Well —"

"Think about it. Let me know."

"All right." Fraser got up. "I may do that." He went out the door without saying goodnight.

HE sat with his feet on the table, chair tilted back and teetering dangerously, hands clasped behind his head, pipe filling the room with blue fog. It was his usual posture for attacking a problem.

And damn it, he thought wearily, this was a question such as he made his living on. An industrial engineer comes into the office. We want this and that — a machine for a very special purpose, let's say. What should we do, Mr. Fraser? Fraser prowls around the plant, reads up on the industry, and then sits down and thinks. The elements of the problem are such-and-such; how can they be combined to yield a solution?

Normally, he uses the mathematical approach, especially in machine design. Most practicing-engineers have a pathetic math background — they use ten pages of elaborate algebra and rusty calculus to figure out something that three vector equations would solve. But you have to get the logical basics straight first, before you can set up your equations.

All right, what is the problem? To get Judy back. That means forcing Kennedy to restore her normal emotional reactions — no, he didn't want her thrust into love of him; he just wanted her as she had been.

What are the elements of the problem? Kennedy acts outside the law, but he has blocked all official channels. He even has connections extending through the Iron Curtain.

Hmmmm — appeal to the FBI? Kennedy couldn't have control over them — yef. However, if Fraser tried to tip off the FBI, they'd act cautiously, if they investigated at all. They'd have to go slow. And Kennedy would find out in time to do something about it.

Martinez could help no further. Sworsky had closer contact with Washington. He'd been so thoroughly cleared that they'd be inclined to trust whatever he said. But Sworsky doubted the whole story; like many men who'd suffered through irresponsible Congressional charges, he was almost fanatic about having proof before accusing anyone of anything. Moreover, Kennedy knew that Sworsky was Fraser's friend; he'd probably be keeping close tabs on the physicist and ready to block any attempts he might make to help. With the backing of a man like Snyder, Kennedy could hire as many detectives as he wanted.

In fact, whatever the counter-attack, it was necessary to go warily.

Kennedy's threat to get rid of Fraser if the engineer kept working against him was not idle mouthing. He could do it — and, being a fanatic, would.

But Kennedy, like the demon of legend, would grant one wish — just to salve his own conscience. Only what should the wish be? Another woman? Or merely to be reconciled, artificially, to an otherwise-intolerable situation?

Judy, Judy, Judy!

Fraser swore at himself. Damn it to hell, this was a problem in logic. No room for emotion. Of course, it might be a problem without a solution. There are plenty of those.

He squinted, trying to visualize the office. He thought of burglary, stealing evidence — silly thought. But let's see, now. What was the layout, exactly? Four suites on one floor of the skyscraper, three of them unimportant offices of unimportant men. And —

Oh, Lord!

Fraser sat for a long while, hardly moving. Then he uncoiled himself and ran, downstairs and into the street and to the nearest pay phone. His own line might be tapped —

"Hello, hello, Juan? . . . Yes, I know I got you out of bed, and I'm not sorry. This is too bloody important . . . Okay, okay . . . Look, I want a complete report on the Messenger Advertising Service . . . When? Immediately, if not sooner. And I mean *complete* . . . That's right, Messenger . . . Okay, fine. I'll buy you a drink sometime."

"Hello, Jim? Were you asleep too? . . . Sorry . . . But look, would you make a list of all the important men you know fairly well? I need it bad . . . No, don't come over. I think I'd better not see you for a while. Just mail it to me . . . All right, so I am paranoid . . ."

JEROME K. FERRIS was a large man, with a sense of his own importance that was even larger. He sat hunched in the chair, his head dwarfed by the aluminum helmet, his breathing shallow. Around him danced and flickered a hundred meters, indicator lights, tubes. There was a low humming in the room, otherwise it was altogether silent, blocked and shielded against the outside world. The fluorescent lights were a muted glow.

Fraser sat watching the greenish trace on the huge oscilloscope screen. It was an intricate set of convolutions, looking more like a plate of spaghetti than anything else. He wondered how many frequencies were involved. Several thousand, at the very least.

"Fraser," repeated Kennedy softly into the ear of the hypnotized man. "Colin Fraser. Colin Fraser." He touched a dial with infinite care. "Colin Fraser. Colin Fraser."

The oscilloscope flickered as he readjusted, a new trace appeared. Kennedy waited for a while, then: "Robert Kennedy. Sentiment, Inc. Robert Kennedy. Sentiment, Inc. Robert Kennedy. Sentiment —"

He turned off the machine, its murmur and glow died away. Facing Fraser with a tight little smile, he said: "All right. Your job is done. Are we even now?"

"As even as we'll ever get, I suppose," said Fraser.

"Well, I was interested," said Fraser.

"I wish you'd trust me," said Kennedy with a hint of wistfulness. "I'd have done the job honestly; you didn't have to watch."

"Frankly, I still don't see what you stand to gain by the doglike devotion of this Ferris. He's rich, but he's too weak and short-sighted to be a leader. I'd never planned on conditioning him for my purposes."

"I've explained that," said Fraser patiently. "Ferris is a large stockholder in a number of corporations. His influence can swing a lot of business my way."

"Yes, I know. I didn't grant your wish blindly, you realize. I had Ferris studied; he's unable to harm me." Kennedy regarded Fraser with hard eyes. "And just in case you still have foolish notions, please remember that I gave him the father-conditioning with respect to myself. He'll do a lot for you, but not if it's going to hurt me in any way."

"I know when I'm licked," said Fraser bleakly; "I'm getting out of town as soon as I finish those courses I'm signed up for."

Kennedy snapped his fingers. "All right, Ferris, wake up now."

Ferris blinked. "What's been happening?" he asked.

"Nothing much," said Kennedy, unbuckling the electrodes. "I've taken my readings. Thank you very much for the help, sir. I'll see that you get due credit when my research is published."

"Ah — yes. Yes." Ferris puffed himself out. Then he put an arm around Fraser's shoulder. "If you aren't busy," he said, "maybe we could go have lunch."

"Thanks," said Fraser. "I'd like to talk to you about a few things."

He lingered for a moment after Ferris had left the room. "I imagine this is goodbye for us," he said.

"Well, so long, at least. We'll probably hear from each other again." Kennedy shook Fraser's hand. "No hard feelings? I did go to a lot of trouble for you — wangling your introduction to Ferris when you'd

named him, and having one of my men persuade him to come here. And right when I'm so infernally busy, too."

"Sure," said Fraser. "It's all right. I can't pretend to love you for what you've done, but you aren't a bad sort."

"No worse than you," said Kennedy with a short laugh. "You've used the machine for your own ends, now."

"Yeah," said Fraser. "I guess I have."

SWORSKY asked, "Why do you insist on calling me from drugstores? And why at my office? I've got a home phone, you know."

"I'm not sure but that our own lines are tapped," said Fraser. "Kennedy's a smart cookie, and don't you forget it. I think he's about ready to dismiss me as a danger, but you're certainly being watched; you're on his list."

"You're getting a persecution-complex. Honest, Colin, I'm worried."

"Well, bear with me for a while. Now, have you had any information on Kennedy since I called last?"

"Hm, no. I did mention to Thomson, as you asked me to, that I'd heard rumors of some revolutionary encephalographic techniques and would be interested in seeing the work. Why did you want me to do that?"

"Thomson," said Fraser, "is one of Kennedy's men. Now look, Jim, before long you're going to be invited to visit Kennedy. He'll give you a spiel about his research and ask to measure your brain waves. I want you to say yes. Then I want to know the exact times of the three appointments he'll give you — the first two, at least."

"Hmmm — if Kennedy's doing what you claim —"

"Jim, it's a necessary risk, but I'm the one who's taking it. You'll be okay, I promise you; though perhaps later you'll read of me being found in the river. You see, I got Kennedy to influence a big stock-owner for me. One of the lesser companies in which he has a loud voice is Messenger. I don't suppose Kennedy knows that. I hope not!"

SWORSKY looked as if he'd been sandbagged. He was white, and the hand that poured a drink shook.

"Lord," he muttered. "Lord, Colin, you were right."

Fraser's teeth drew back from his lips. "You went through with it, eh?"

"Yes. I let the son hypnotize me, and afterward I walked off with a dreamy expression, as you told me to. Just three hours ago, he dropped around here in person. He gave me a long rigmarole about the

stupidity of military secrecy, and how the Soviet Union stands for peace and justice. I hope I acted impressed; I'm not much of an actor."

"You don't have to be. Just so you didn't overdo it. To one of Kennedy's victims, obeying his advice is so natural that it doesn't call for any awe-struck wonderment."

"And he wanted data from me! Bombardment cross-sections. Critical values. Resonance levels. My Lord, if the Russians found that out through spies it'd save them three years of research. This is an FBI case, all right."

"No, not yet." Fraser laid an urgent hand on Sworsky's arm. "You've stuck by me so far, Jim. Go along a little further."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Why —" Fraser's laugh jarred out. "Give him what he wants, of course."

KENNEDY looked up from his desk, scowling. "All right, Fraser," he said. "You've been a damned nuisance, and it's pretty patient of me to see you again. But this is the last time. Wha'd'you want?"

"It's the last time I'll need to see you, perhaps." Fraser didn't sit down. He stood facing Kennedy. "You've had it, friend; straight up."

"What do you mean?" Kennedy's hand moved toward his buzzer.

"Listen before you do anything," said Fraser harshly. "I know you tried to bring Jim Sworsky under the influence. You asked him for top-secret data. A few hours ago, you handed the file he brought you on to Bryce, who's no doubt at the Amtorg offices this minute. That's high treason, Kennedy; they execute people for doing that."

The psychologist slumped back.

"Don't try to have your bully boys get rid of me," said Fraser. "Sworsky is sitting by the phone, waiting to call the FBI. I'm the only guy who can stop him."

"But —" Kennedy's tongue ran around his lips. "But he committed treason himself. He gave me the papers!"

Fraser grinned. "You don't think those were authentic, do you? I doubt if you'll be very popular in the Soviet Union either, once they've tried to build machines using your data."

Kennedy looked down at the floor. "How did you do it?" he whispered.

"Remember Ferris? The guy you fixed up for me? He owns a share of your next-door neighbor, the Messenger Advertising Service. I fed him a song and dance about needing an office to do some important work, only my very whereabouts had to be secret. The Messenger

people were moved out without anybody's knowing. I installed myself there one night, also a simple little electric oscillator.

"Encephalography is damn delicate work; it involves amplifications up to several million. The apparatus misbehaves if you give it a hard look. Naturally, your lab and the machine were heavily shielded, but even so, a radio emitter next door would be bound to throw you off. My main trouble was in lousing you up just a little bit, not enough to make you suspect anything.

"I only worked at that during your calibrating sessions with Sworsky. I didn't have to be there when you turned the beam on him, because it would be calculated from false data and be so far from his pattern as to have no effect. You told me yourself how precise an adjustment was needed. Sworsky played along, then. Now we've got proof — not that you meddled with human lives, but that you are a spy." —

Kennedy sat without moving. His voice was a broken mumble. "I was going to change the world. I had hopes for all humankind. And you, for the sake of one woman —"

"I never trusted anybody with a messiah complex. The world is too big to change single-handed; you'd just have bungled it up worse than it already is. A lot of dictators started out as reformers and ended up as mass-executioners; you'd have done the same."

Fraser leaned over his desk. "I'm willing to make a deal, though," he went on. "Your teeth are pulled; there's no point in turning you in. Sworsky and Martinez and I are willing just to report on Bryce, and let you go, if you'll change back all your subjects. We're going to read your files, and watch and see that you do it. Every one."

Kennedy bit his lip. "And the machine —?"

"I don't know. We'll settle that later. Okay, God, here's the phone-number of Judy Harkness. Ask her to come over for a special treatment. At once."

A MONTH later, the papers had a story about a plausible maniac who had talked his way into the Columbia University laboratories, where Gavotti's puzzling machine was being studied, and pulled out a hammer and smashed it into ruin before he could be stopped. Taken to jail, he committed suicide in his cell. The name was Kennedy.

Fraser felt vague regret, but it didn't take him long to forget it; he was too busy making plans for his wedding.



History records numerous small colonies, based upon unusual ideas of the family unit and social group. Most of these have failed in practice, but usually because they were based upon idealistic notions which had little to do with the economic or social necessities of their times. But what of a new theory of the family and social unit which is designed to conform with actual conditions? And what is such a group likely to face when a new member, a person without any understanding of the actual conditions, has to be accepted as a member?

The Way Of Decision

by M. C. PEASE

TOM VORD sat on the porch of his clan's house with his feet on the railing. Across the valley, he could hear the muted roar of the commuter track that led south to New Haven; but all he could see were the sprawling rows of private houses that strung along the belt. And behind them, more isolated from each other, the larger structures of the homes of other clans. The bright greenness of spring lay over the land, and it was fresh and sparkling. A typical suburban scene in this year of 2013, Tom thought. Even the mixture of private houses and clan was symbolic of the time. And in a way, symbolic also of the problem he had.

Tom's face was brooding. His was a nature not easily satisfied, or content with half-solutions—and he took the problems of the clan seriously. Partly as a consequence of this, but also because he had the self-control to avoid crises, he was the unacknowledged leader of the clan, and its chief administrator. His age was hard to guess. He was not old; his face was unlined, and his hair both present and dark; his eyes showed an enthusiasm that indicated youth. And yet he was not young; there was a maturity in his glance, an acceptance in his attitude that made him seem older than he was. And so he sat there, relaxed, idly looking out over the countryside, even as he wondered if the present crisis was enough to disrupt the clan.

Below him Ricky Vord came toiling up the steps to the house. Ricky was the opposite of Tom. Young and intense, with a devil-may-

care attitude, he was the born salesman. His enthusiasms came bubbling out, and he had the ability to carry with him anyone who might object. And if he did not have the deepness of thought fully to understand the implications of all that he said or did, he was the better salesman for it.

With a wave, Ricky entered the house. There were muffled sounds from the interior, and it was not for several minutes that the boy appeared on the porch. Then it was with two tall glasses in his hands. "I consider this Tom Collins weather," he said. "I suspect you do, too, only you're too lazy to mix your own." He handed Tom the second drink and sat down beside him.

"Possibly," Tom said with a smile. "I certainly won't refuse. What do you know?"

"A lot of things," Ricky answered. He took a long drink. "Ah, that's good," he said. "You know, I been down talking to Graves again. We got that thing in the bag if we want it." His voice was off-hand, deliberately so, Tom knew.

"We have?" Tom's voice also was careful. "Do you mean with or without the girl?"

"Well . . . You can't blame Graves for wanting to see his daughter settled. He figures that if she gets into a clan, maybe she'll calm down. And he could be right. Maybe she will; who knows? After all, she does want to come in. That must mean something."

"Sure, it means something," Tom agreed, his voice slightly sardonic. "It means she wants to collect a whole clan. And as far as I am concerned, she's welcome to it — as long as it isn't the Vord one."

"Look," Ricky swung up onto the edge of his chair, turning to face Tom and leaning towards him; "you're only seeing one side of this. You think Marcia's just looking for a thrill, for something new, and different—and that that's why she wants to join us. Maybe it is; I won't deny it. I don't happen to think that's the reason, but it could be. But what if it is? Why do we have to rear back and stand on our dignity? Why can't we take her in, let her have her thrill, and then get out. If a thrill is all she's looking for, she'll get out quick enough. Unless she gets converted — that could happen, too. What do we lose?"

"And look what we lose if we do sit blindly on our dignity," he went on with a rush. "The job at Midland's running out. Times are tough. There's not many openings for a bunch of wiring-assemblers. As it stands now, the choice is between Eltron Electric and Universal. Universal we can get with no strings, except that we have to go to Detroit — and except that it doesn't pay very well.

"Eltron, on the other hand, is Graves; and Graves doesn't like the clans. He's never had anything to do with them. A Free-Laborite from way back. Only he's got a daughter, Marcia; and Marcia, bless her sweet little soul, wants to join a clan. So the old man's willing to take another look at things; he'll give us a contract when Marcia's a Vord, and it'll be a good contract. In fact, he'll damn near let us write it. What can we lose?"

"You think we should take her in," Tom said.

"Yes I do," Ricky answered. "Otherwise, we have to pull up stakes and move, and that job out at Universal is no picnic. We won't do much more than break even on it, and maybe it'll only last a few months; it's that kind of a thing."

TOM smiled suddenly. "You are not quite consistent," he said. "You are worrying about Universal being temporary. And yet you brush aside the fact that Marcia may pull out. What would happen to us at Eltron if she did?"

"I don't know," Ricky answered, unabashed. "Maybe by that time we'd have Graves convinced. Most guys who run companies get to like the idea of contracting the clans, when they give it a try."

"They should," Tom grunted. "It's the answer to their labor problems."

"Sure," Ricky answered. "Only there are still guys like Graves around who don't see it. His pet topic of conversation is the Ilton Clan; he mentions it every time anyone suggests that the clans bring stability."

"But the Ilton clan was wrong from the first," Tom said. "The guys who put it together were unstable themselves; they tried to make the clan a small-size empire of their own — almost a bunch of slaves."

"So, eventually, they had a revolt. It had gotten to be a large outfit, since they were willing to accept anybody who would be a slave — and there are always lots of those — so the revolt was extensive and bloody. That's not typical of the clans. Not of the better ones; not of those that are really clans — and not empires. With any new idea like the clans, you are bound to get some bad results. But do you hang the good examples for the bad ones?" He sounded irritated.

"Don't argue with me," Ricky said. "I'm just telling you what Graves has in mind. Of course, actually, there's more to it than that. The thing is, he took over Eltron Electric when it was practically on the rocks; he salvaged it, built it up, made it what it is today. All by himself."

Using his own wits and his own guts. It all came out of him. Oh, sure, he had help—some pretty able guys were in with him. But they were the same type: Each of them knowing his own value, depending on himself and not on any others. They worked together because that was where their self-interest lay. A bunch of Free-Traders in the best tradition of the word. Free-Trading's been their life-blood; naturally none of them are apt to welcome the clan idea, and Graves least of all."

"Do they really think they can hold out indefinitely?" Tom asked. "They must know they are being left behind, that they're getting out of step."

"I doubt it," Ricky said. "Graves says that the world is off on a cock-eyed binge with this clan idea, and I'm quoting his words. He figures it's going to come to its senses, eventually. At least that's what he says; what he really believes deep down in his heart, I don't know. Maybe, underneath, he's convinced; maybe if you could get him to admit the truth, he knows he has to accept us if he's going to survive. Maybe that's why he's letting Marcia twist his arm; it could be."

Tom nodded. "In any case, we're in the middle," he said. He looked sardonic. "Caught between the hammer of present reality and the stubborn anvil of Graves." He finished off his drink. "What do you propose to do?"

"I propose to let Graves pay our bills, in spite of his opinions," Ricky said. "And if that includes Marcia, why I don't really mind. One has to put up with some inconveniences; and when the inconvenience is a dish like her, I don't really mind at all." He leered in an exaggerated way.

Tom chuckled. "Yeah," he said, "I know what you mean." He became serious. "But that's my point; the girls will hardly take this point of view."

"They don't seem to object particularly," Ricky said. "Why should they? They're only six to our seven — so Marcia will just round things out, nice and even-like."

"Marcia, as you say, is a 'dish'," Tom agreed "and I can't quite see her rounding anything out to make it come out even. I think you're a damned optimist. Besides, I'm not so sure the girls don't mind. They joke about it, yes, but some of the jokes bite. I think maybe they hope they won't have to object. Afraid we'll call them jealous. After all, what would you do in their place?"

"I don't know," Ricky said. "But if that is a factor, then I think they ought to argue their own case. Where are they?"

"Oh, Betsy and Rita have taken the kids down to the beach. Sandy is out shopping for food. She figured she'd go down to Mark's Place, so she'll be a bit late. Esther went over to see about shoes; she thinks she may get a better bargain at a place she heard of down the line. Polly and Joan went in with the boys to work; they're trying to wind up the contract with Midland by this week. Decided there's no point in stringing it out. Get it wound up and then take a vacation. I've been over at Midland finishing up the legal details. Also had to go downtown this morning to see the Income Tax people. When do you suppose they're going to get a system set up that's reasonable for the clans?" His voice betrayed a chronic irritation.

RICKY shrugged. "When the clans carry most of the votes. The whole idea of a clan is too new in society for the law to have caught up with it. If the clans had a majority, they could force things — and eventually they will. But not yet. Particularly, since the most vocal part of the non-clan majority considers us immoral. Destroyers of the family, mockers of the sacrament of marriage."

The sarcasm was heavy in his voice. "Someday, they'll see we've saved the home and the family — not destroyed it. We've brought it into line with the social facts of today, rescued it from the perennial frustrations that filled the divorce courts. Aye, and the insane asylums, too. Damn few people used to get out of marriage anything like what they ought to. Take the average Free-Trader and Monogamist: His family is just one small part of his life. Separate, distinct. It should be a solid rock on which he can build his life outside. But it isn't, except maybe in a very rare case. Mostly, it's just a thing that occupies some certain hours of his day, with no relation to the rest. He is left without an anchor. And the girl? She is boxed into a small sphere of activity, bound by her duties to an inexorable frustration of limited horizons."

He jumped up and started pacing up and down, gesturing with his arms. "Is this the great and beautiful thing they want to preserve? Or will they admit the realities? Will they admit the truths of anthropology? Realize that the idea of the family unit has had real meaning only when it has been the economic unit as well? And that in the modern world the economic unit is larger — and, therefore, the family must be, too? In the modern world, the economic unit is a team of workers;

therefore, the family must be large enough to include the team. What's immoral about this? It gives the family meaning in the modern world, and it gives the individual something to live by. It gives him a reality that he could not have alone."

"Clear, concise, and possibly illuminating if I didn't know it already," Tom smiled at the younger one's missionary instincts. "Why don't you tell Graves this? Maybe we would not have to absorb his daughter."

"What do you think I've been telling him?" Ricky asked. He looked a trifle abashed, knowing that his enthusiasm had run away with him. "He hit the ceiling when Marcia first started talking up the clan idea, vowed that no daughter of his would ever disgrace the family name. I managed to talk him out of that, anyway. But, I'm no magician; he's still a Free-Trader of the old school. So my convincing him meant that he was willing to use his power to get his daughter—what she wants. Which is us."

"In other words," Tom said, "you talked him out of thinking the clans are immoral, so he decided to *buy* one." He bit the sentence off.

"Well, yes," Ricky admitted; "that's one way of looking at it. But let's look at it another way. The rules of the clan are that a new member is provisional for a year. Any time in that year, we can always throw her out if we have to. And even afterwards — when we can no longer throw her out, and it could be we won't want to — there'll still be no reason why we should have to bow down to the old man. We can walk out on him, at least, any time. If Marcia doesn't want to come, then she can stay behind; and neither Graves nor anybody else can stop us."

"It sounds good," Tom said. "It's just that I don't believe it. The strength of the clan is its independence. We thirteen, and our children, against the world. One unit, free, and in a sense, complete. If we let anyone else decide who shall be in us and who shall not, then we are less free by that much. And by that much we are less strong. Maybe I'm a stubborn fool, Ricky, but that's the way I see it."

Ricky leaned against the porch railing. His face was thoughtful. "I wish I could convince you," he said. "The trouble is, I haven't got time. Graves has to have his answer now, to plan his production. Anyway, Marcia's getting restless; I think I'll have to tell them yes or no tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Tom looked startled. "What are you going to do? Caucus it tonight?"

Ricky nodded. "I have to, Tom. It isn't that I want to bull it through you. But if we don't get a vote on it tonight, then we've given up. Graves has said he has to know, so he can plan; we can't keep it in the air any longer. And I think the clan has a right to vote on the problem." He looked apologetic.

Tom sighed. "We seem to have agreed to disagree," he said. "So maybe it's better to get the showdown over with." He got up, walked over to Ricky, and punched him lightly in the shoulder, "Let's break clean and come out fighting at the bell." And he walked back inside the house to his room.

2

IT WAS only a short time later that Tom heard the sound of tires on the drive. He went out to find that it was Sandy in the beach-wagon. The name Sandy fitted her, even if it was short for Sandra. Blonde, with something of a tendency to freckle, she had a quick alertness that was almost tomboyish. Almost, but not quite, for she was very much a woman.

"Need help?" Tom asked, giving her a quick kiss and moving to the back to start unloading the bundles. "How did you make out?"

"Not bad," she said; "In fact, it was fun. I don't know whether it was worth it or not; it's a long drive down there. Maybe I saved enough to pay for the gasoline. But they're more used to dealing with the clans. The stores around here play both sides of the fence. Much more congenial atmosphere down there."

Tom could guess what she meant. The clans, buying in semi-quantity for their groups of people, could demand and get preferential treatment of a sort. But a number of the stores that still wanted the business of private individuals — many of whom were bitterly anti-clan — did their best to balance the issue with a lack of courtesy. He looked at the girl with sympathy but she seemed cheerfully unconcerned. She was, he thought, the kind to take that kind of treatment without a murmur of complaint, and without giving any overt recognition to it. And yet she was also the kind to feel it deep inside her.

When the car was unloaded, they sat down at the kitchen table to rest a moment. Tom sat back in his chair, eyes brooding. It was not for several minutes that he noticed that Sandy was watching him, her chin on her palms, her elbows on the table. And he knew that she knew he was troubled and was waiting to see if he wanted to talk about it.

"Ricky thinks we ought to decide about Marcia, tonight," he said, his voice sounding blunt even to himself.

"You mean whether we should take her in or not?" she asked.

"Yeah," Tom answered. "He thinks we should, whether she fits or not — just so we can get the contract with Eltron Electric. Because otherwise we would have to pull up stakes and go take that thing at Universal."

"And you don't think we should?" she prompted.

"No, I don't," he said. "It seems to me like we'd be selling out if we did that. Maybe I'm being a purist about it, but damn it all . . ."

"But you can stop it easily," she said. "According to the charter, a vote of membership has to be unanimous. All you have to do is say no."

"Yeah — well, that's true," he said. "Only this is more than that. That rule is just about ordinary members, the idea being to keep feuds out. If somebody isn't going to be able to get along with a new member, why let's find it out at the start. And, since the old member is more important than the new one, let's block the new one."

"But this thing's different; this isn't just a case of whether she's compatible or not. I have nothing against Marcia, personally; I just don't like this way of doing business. But this ties up our whole future, economic and everything else. If I blackball her, I'm blackballing our contract with Eltron; and matters of contract, or economics, or whatall, are not supposed to be subject to veto. No . . . I won't vote against her all by my lonesome. If the clan is pretty well split, maybe I will pull a technicality. But I won't just up and blackball her all by myself, just because I think I'm right."

Sandy was thoughtful. "What about this job at Eltron," she asked, finally. "Can we swing it? It's bigger than the job here at Midland, and bigger than the one at Universal. Is it too big?"

"No," Tom said. "We can handle it. Oh, we may have to hire a few private citizens, but we can do most of it ourselves. If we can average nine people a week, we'll be all right. And we can do that if we leave two to take care of the kids, one to manage the house and cook and all, and one to fill in, taking care of other outside matters, having babies, and whatnot. But even if we can only average eight ourselves, it is still reasonable with a couple of private citizens. No, I'm not afraid of the job."

"It'll be funny working alongside of private citizens," Sandy said, musingly; "I hope we pick better ones than those guys at Sanford Radio."

TOM laughed. "We will," he said. "The trouble there was that we didn't hire them; the company did. And the guys were good enough — they just didn't like the clans."

"That's one way of putting it," Sandy said. "They just had some pre-conceived ideas as to what kind of woman would join a clan. Happens they were wrong, but it took a bit of jiu-jitsu to convince them."

"Well, that won't happen here," Tom said. "We'll be hiring them ourselves, and we'll probably be able to pick up all we want from the other assembly clans. Times are rough all over, and they're not too loaded with work, either. Of course, the rest of the plant is another matter; but I don't think there'll be any open trouble. Things have gotten a little better since those early days. People know a little more about the clans, even if they don't approve."

"So there is just the question of whether we want to do it, or not," she said. He nodded but said nothing. "And you would much rather we didn't want to. . . . Tell me, what's she like? I've only seen her the couple of times that Ricky's brought her to lunch."

"That's about all I have," Tom answered. "Oh, I've seen her out at her old man's place a couple of times, too, but then I was working on the old man. As far as I know, she is what she seems to be. Beautiful in a way. A bit of a mantrap. Probably spoiled. I don't know. What did you think of her?"

"That's a damning sketch if I ever heard one," Sandy said. "I wonder if that's all there is to her. Is she just a spoiled brat with a well-developed body? Is that all she is? What's her background like? I mean aside from money?"

"Background?" Tom hesitated. "Well, she went through college, somewhere or other. She's traveled in Europe a bit. Generally circulated around. Cultured, I guess you'd call it."

"Certainly her old man knows what it's about. He's quite a character, you know. Very dignified, very polished. Fine oak paneling in his study. Lots of books, and he's probably read them, too. Quite a collection of classical music, and he knows his way around it too — at least he knows more about it than I do. The very picture of a cultured gentleman. And it is with a perfectly gentlemanly manner that he tears you apart into little pieces."

"Oh?" Sandy raised her eyebrow. "What happened?"

Tom smiled ruefully. "We had an argument." He shrugged. "The clans versus Free-Trading. He has a fine and delicate hand with sarcasm. No, I take that back. I don't know whether it was sarcasm or not;

maybe he was just leading me out. Anyway, I came out of there feeling as if I'd been wrung dry."

He was silent a moment, and Sandy made no move to break his thoughts. "The logical question here, of course, is to what extent this makes me think the way I do. And maybe it does, I don't know. I'm afraid of the guy; I got the feeling he knows exactly what he's doing and why. And I think he may be too strong for us."

"You think we might end up as his puppets?" Sandy said, her voice neutral.

"Something like that," Tom admitted. "Oh, I know that's probably a foolish thought. In fact, now that I look at it, I know it is. The guy just impressed me; frankly I came out feeling somewhat awed by him. I'm not used to the feeling. I guess it's just that he comes from a background that I don't know anything about."

Sandy pursed her lips and nodded. There was a pixyish gleam to her eyes as she got up and started towards the door. As she left she asked him: "And Marcia, is she anything like her old man?" She was out the door and gone before he realized what her question meant.

He sat there, staring after her for five full minutes before he got up and started to put the food away.

3

HE HAD put the food away and prepared himself a cup of coffee, when he heard the clatter of the bus. That would be Betsy and Rita with the kids, he knew, back from the beach. By the noisy commotion, he gathered they had enjoyed themselves, with no more than the usual number of cuts and bruises and hurt feelings. Eleven kids, the oldest eight years, could not conceivably go to the beach for the afternoon without some crises; but, at least, they seemed to have gotten back in a happy condition.

Tom smiled as he thought of them, picturing the throng, but he made no move to join them. When Sue, aged four, stuck her head in the door and grinned to see him there, he just said "Hi." This she took as an invitation, and hopped on in to begin telling him in disconnected fragments, all about the day. He let her ramble for a moment until the first flush of her enthusiasm was over. Then, with a kiss on the forehead and a poke in the stomach, he sent her out, suggesting that she tell him all about it later.

When she had gone, he sat there, thinking about the girl. Sue was

very much like her mother, Polly. Dark-haired with light bones, she had the quick and easy movements of a born dancer. And her eyes sparkled with dancing lights. Sue, like Polly, was a born flirt, but a flirt out of sheer interest in life. She was so much the image of her mother, both in face and build and also temperament, that he wondered who her father was. Certainly there was not much of any of the men visible in her.

What would Marcia mean to the children? With a start he came back to his problem. There was nothing apparent of the maternal instinct in her. But then, neither was there in Joan, either; and Joan was a perfectly good member of the clan.

"Oh, sometimes they laughed at Joan for being much too serious about her part. She was the artist and the self-acknowledged arbiter of good taste, the monitor of the proper way. She was the gracious hostess when visitors were at hand. To her the clan had conceded the job of deciding the arrangement of the rooms. To her the girls turned for advice in how to dress. And her advice was good. With some real though limited talent as an artist, she had the touch of instinct, the sense of rightness, and the drive to be unsatisfied with anything but what was right. And she, conceding that children were necessary and even desirable in their places, still deplored the havoc they could wreak. She was not a good manager of the children.

But then, he thought, why should she be? The clan had other purposes than to raise children; that was one of the important needs the clan fulfilled, but it was only one. In fact, it was one of the strengths of the clan that the different members had separate talents they could bring to it. Each with his own value, each unique. With the separate-ness that let them complement each other to form the whole. This was their strength.

No, Marcia was not greatly maternal, certainly — but this was not important. But he could not quite decide what was important.

HE WAS still puzzling over it when Betsy bounced into the kitchen. "Whew," she said, giving him a light kiss, "what a day!" She pulled out a mirror from her pocket and looked into it. "I think I'm going to have a red nose. That sun was bright and hot; I hope none of the kids got too much. But they *will* keep dashing into the water, and it's hard to catch them again to get them to put their shirts on. I think Timmy's back is a little red, but I guess it won't be too much." She collapsed violently into a chair.

Tom smiled at her. It was refreshing to see anyone who could be tired in such a dynamic way. "You look as if you had a day," he said.

"We did," she said, looking happy. She heaved herself up to get a cup and saucer and to pour herself a cup of coffee. Then, sitting down, she looked at him. "And what have you been doing?" she asked him.

"Oh, buzzing around town," he told her. "And brooding."

"Brooding?" she asked. He explained to her what the situation was, telling her that they must soon decide what to do about Marcia — whether to accept her as a member of the clan or not. He told her that only by accepting the girl could they get the job at Eltron Electronics that they wanted. And he told her Ricky's thinking that the thing must be decided that night, and warned her of the coming caucus. The words boiled out of him; when he was through, he slumped down, suddenly tired.

Betsy cocked her head and studied him. There was a soft look in her eyes of the sort she usually saved for the children. "Why has it upset you?" she asked.

"Upset me?" Tom seemed surprised. "Well, yes, I suppose it has. Sue was in here, and I got to thinking of the kids. What this'll mean to them."

"The kids?" She looked surprised. "Why should this mean anything to the kids? Anything special, that is?"

"Well, if we turn her down, we got to take the Universal job," he explained. "And that means moving. Moving's always hard on kids. And if we accept her, then the kids'll have a lot to do with her."

"I assume she won't roast them live over the coals," Betsy said. "And I think the kids are tough enough to take almost anything else." She snickered. "You don't see them as much as I do. If you did you'd know they were a lot tougher than they look, the delicate little things!"

"Oh, I'm not talking about that," he said. "I don't expect her to bat them around or anything. But I just wonder how they'll take to *her*."

She shrugged. "If they don't like her, they can always come to me. Or Rita. Or Polly or Esther or Sandy. Or even Joan, providing they don't mess up the livingroom while they do it. The kids will get along, don't worry.

"As a matter of fact," she went on, "that's a funny thing. One of the chief arguments against the clans is that it doesn't single out a man and a woman as the parents of a child. This is supposed to do something to the child — make him insecure, somehow. But as far as I can see, it makes him more secure. In the first place, he's got that many

more parents to choose from, and he can usually find one at least in the mood and with the time to give him what he needs at the moment. Then, too, the clan can afford to have one or two of its people completely concentrated on the children at any given time. And that job can get sort of passed around so nobody gets fed up with it.

"Or, rather, if a person does get fed up with the kids, she doesn't have to force herself to be halfway decent to them; she doesn't have to have anything to do with them at all until she gets over her blues. So most of the time, the kids get the kind of attention they ought to get, and they get it from a person who's in the mood to give it. Personally, I think that they're a lot better off under this system, and you'd have a hard time telling me any different."

"They do look healthy and happy," he said.

"They sure do." She looked proud and satisfied. "I'd hate to be the one to try to keep up with them if they were any healthier. Or any fuller of ideas."

"That's why I hate to risk it," he told her. "Everything's going so well now... The kids are so obviously... But I take it you don't think there's much risk?"

"No." Her tone was incisive. "Any storms she can cook up, the kids can stand better than you and I can."

"Maybe you're right," Tom conceded. "But what about yourself? You think she is apt to make 'storms'?"

BETSY shrugged. "There's always storms when you take in a new member. You have to adjust; and, even more, the new one has to adjust. And adjustments aren't ever easy. I remember when I came in. I had some bad times — and I was brought up in a clan, too; I knew what I was getting into. But still there were times when it hurt. When I felt lost. When I didn't know what your people were like. When I felt like a stranger, not knowing your private jokes and unconscious language. When I felt out of place and alone.

"There were plenty of times when this happened, but I stuck it out. And I learned. I learned what made you people tick, and why you did some of the things you did. I grew into being a part of you. Now I am one of the clan, legally, socially, and in my inmost self.

"That's my story. Marcia will have a lot harder time; she doesn't even know what a clan is. She's not only never been a part of one, but the people she has been with have sneered at them, and made no effort to understand. She hasn't even been able to get along with one hus-

band; she's going to have a hard time learning to get along with seven. Not to mention six co-wives. Chances are she's been spoiled, made the center of things without due cause. She was an only child, wasn't she? She's going to have it awfully tough."

"Do you think she can take it?" Tom asked.

"Not knowing the lady, that's guessing too hard," Betsy answered. "I think it's possible that she can learn. And maybe it's not entirely against her that she doesn't know anything about the clans except what's wrong. She'll soon find out she doesn't know a thing, and then she can start from scratch — learn like the kids do. Maybe that's easier than the unlearning of the 'almost-right' that people like me have to do. At least she's got no preconceived ideas that will stand more than a day or two of actual experience." She shrugged.

"The thing that I'm worried about," Tom said, "is that she may be able to split us — divide us up into factions and set us against each other. I hope she can't, but what happens if she does?"

"Then we split," Betsy answered. "But so what? I don't think she can do it; but even if she can, so what? I wouldn't want it to happen but it wouldn't be a disaster. We'd all land on our feet somewhere. I know I'd head out for the nearest clan and I'd get into that clan just as soon as I could. When I got into it, and got accepted as a real part of it, then I'd think of the rest of this as just an unhappy incident. A tragedy, but not the end of life. But as far as I'm concerned, this is too remote a possibility to worry about."

"You are quite unafraid, aren't you?" Tom said.

"Yes," she answered simply, her voice calm and cool. "I'm not afraid of Marcia — not of what she can do to the kids or to myself. I think the kids are strong enough emotionally to stand anything. And I think I am, too."

There was a quiet confidence in her voice. She reached out and patted his hand. Then, getting up, she started to get out the food for the evening meal while Tom continued to sit there, thinking. And when Tom got up and walked out, she still said nothing but looked after him with a look that had something warm and tender in it.

As he walked through the livingroom, he saw Rita stretched out on the couch. He looked questioningly at her wondering if the day had been too hard for her, being, as she was, six months along towards the twelfth child of the clan. But she smiled at him and shook her head. "Don't be worried," she said; "I'm just a little tired but not too much."

"Anything I can get you?" he asked.

"No, thanks," she said, her voice cheerful. "I just need to get off my feet."

He started to say something about Marcia, but then stopped. What good would it do? he asked himself. Rita, with the instinct of birth close upon her, was too absorbed in herself and the life she carried. The problem, to her, would exist only if it threatened herself or her child. And by all the signs, she felt no threat. Her calm acceptance of the daily life, her quiet absorption in the now and here, measured a confidence in the clan that was complete.

No, to talk of Marcia could do no good. If he succeeded in impressing her with the importance of the problem, it would be because he made her realize that Marcia was a threat. It would be at the expense of her feeling of security, the security that let her wait her time out in calm acceptance and assurance. And if he did not persuade her of the problem's significance, she could not contribute to it. Under normal circumstances, she was not one to deal with abstract questions. She had an acute awareness of personalities that transcended logic. She had an instinct, a sixth sense, almost, for responding to the needs of others. But she was not a philosopher, and neither could she handle abstract problems.

And so he smiled at her and told her: "Call me if you do want anything. I'll be outside." And he passed on through and out the door.

4

AS HE walked out the door, he saw, coming in the gate, the rest of the clan returning from work. The children were rushing to meet them, whooping their greetings. The whole scene was one of happy chaos. Out in front was Paul, his round, cherubic face beaming with delight. He bent down to whisper something in little Randy's ear which sent that boy off shrieking with delight. Behind him was Sam, Polly, and Herb.

Sam's face was dark and his eyes deepset. Generally, he looked sullen and dour. But those who knew him, could also see the twinkle in his eye and knew that he had a subtle and penetrating sense of humor. The kids liked him, and both Alice and Ken, aged five and six, were crowding around him now while he gravely asked them something.

Polly, beside him, was peering around delightedly, sparkling with the general excitement. Her eyes were darting all around looking, Tom knew, not for any one thing or person, but simply to absorb it all.

On Polly's other side was Herb. The mechanic of the crowd, he had an eager interest that was somewhat boyish. His happiest moments were spent under the car or bus with his face all smeared with grease. With people, he lacked the touch that he had with machines. There was an awkwardness, almost an uncouthness, that would have been tragic, Tom thought, anywhere but in the haven of a clan.

Behind them, Joan walked with Mike. Her face was still earnest and intense, and Tom thought that she was probably expounding some theory of the art. He felt sorry for Mike, but, then, Mike was a chap that invited that sort of thing. He seemed to be chronically unable to express a disinterest in anything and, as a consequence, was the one on which most of them poured out their troubles and their ideas. But, then, perhaps he was interested. Maybe he was interested in the people even when he was not in the ideas.

Finally, there came Esther and Pete. Esther was the feminine organizer of the clan. She it was that planned the details of what should happen when, and who should do what. The others were just as glad to leave these matters to her. She had a passion for fairness that made them trust her distribution of the chores. And she had the will to get things organized, the wish to see things settled long in advance. Tom saw she was talking earnestly to Pete; he wondered what project she was working on.

Pete was the philosopher of the clan. With a somewhat pixyish mind, he was afraid of no thoughts, and took nothing at all for granted. As to whether he was a really deep thinker, or just one who liked to play with logic and semantics, Tom did not know. Perhaps it was too soon to tell. Philosophers are not made at the age of twenty-five, but only when they have lived their lives, and are ready to profit fully by its experience. At the moment, Tom saw, he was looking rather bored by Esther, and seemed to welcome the onrushing crowd of kids.

TOM looked at them all. Whom should he talk to? he wondered. Or should he talk to any of them? There was no longer in him the same drive about the problem. In some way he did not yet understand, his talks with Sandy and with Betsy had boiled off some of the urgency. And yet, the problem still was urgent. Ricky still meant to bring it up at caucus, and Tom still had to know what his own response would be. It was with something of a shock that he realized that he did not know — but the fact was that he did not. And he did not even know why he was

uncertain. The problem had seemed so clear when Ricky had first mentioned it; but now, now it was not clear at all.

Tom waited until they all had washed off the dust of the road and combed their hair and changed their dresses. In the meantime, he mixed them cocktails ready for their return. And when they had, once more assembled, he let them trade around the items of the day's news. It was not until he saw Pete wander off to gaze out the window at the gathering sunset that he made any move.

When he saw that Pete was alone, he went over to stand beside him. "What do you know, Pete," he said.

Pete turned to face him. "Hi, Tom. You look puzzled tonight. Not your usual fatherly self. What's up?"

Tom shrugged. "It's this Marcia business that's bothering me," he said. "Ricky's going to caucus it tonight, and I been trying to figure it out."

"What's his rush?" Pete asked. "Or is Ricky just being impetuous?"

"No," Tom said. "There's a reason for it. Graves has got to make his arrangements soon; so he's been putting the pressure on for us to decide quick. If we don't decide tonight, we are apt to be left out."

"Oh?" Pete's voice was noncommittal.

"What do you think of it?" Tom asked. "Should we take her in or not?"

"Well, I don't know," Pete stalled. "The reasons why we should are pretty obvious. It will solve some of our worries if we do. What are the reasons why we shouldn't?"

"I don't know," Tom said. "It just seems wrong to me. Seems like we'd be giving up too much of our...well, our ideals. Maybe I'm being old fashioned, but it just seems immoral to me, somehow."

Pete leaned against the window frame. "You mean it's like marrying a woman for her money? Sort of gigolo-like?"

Tom nodded. "Yes, I guess that's it," he said. "I suppose what's bothering me is that the idea of the clan is to make the family the same thing as the economic unit; but this seems like it's being too damn economic about it, too mercenary. It just doesn't seem right."

Pete said nothing for a long moment while he meditated. "Well, that's one way of looking at it," he said, finally. "But on the other hand, maybe you got to stop and think this thing through. Why is it bad to marry a woman for her money? It occurs to me that a monogamistic marriage of that sort is bad — and I think it probably *is* bad — because

it inevitably leads to living a lie. You got to fool the woman, because otherwise she doesn't get anything out of the marriage. If the marriage is to mean anything, both the man and the woman have got to get out of it some sense of belonging; that's what the marriage is for. Now the man may get the belonging, the security, from the money. But the wife — she can't get anything out of it unless he can fool her. She's already got the money, so that doesn't mean anything to her; and she's got what the money can buy.

"Unless he can fool her into thinking that he really loves her for herself alone, she doesn't get anything at all out of it. So, he's got to fool her. And the worst of it is that, if he doesn't succeed, she'll walk out on him with her money; then he'll lose what he's after, too — so he's got good reason for being afraid. The situation is necessarily unstable; it's almost bound to lead to grief of one kind or another. So, that kind of a marriage is bad."

"Why's this any different?" Tom asked.

"For one thing, because we can't live a lie," Pete said. "Living a lie of that sort requires great concentration and continuous effort. With the clan, no one person can concentrate on any one other. The lie, if it ever got started, would be a very short-lived one; and I don't think it would ever get started. Not only is it pretty obvious when a new girl is added to a clan, that we can't all be so desperately in love with her; it isn't necessary. A person joins the clan. She's getting a new way of life, and a whole new group of friends. Until she's been in the clan a while, these are not more than friends; it takes time really to integrate a person into a clan. But, at least they are friends — people who will help you to stand against the world.

"So she does get something out of the clan. She gets a sense of belonging, and it doesn't depend on any one person but on the group-structure of the clan. The clan is there to belong to, regardless of any one individual. But with a monogamistic marriage, the structure is lost when either person pulls out. So this thing means that, in the first place, the clan can't live a lie, and, in the second, that there is no need for the lie, anyway. Finally, this means that the situation is quite different from a monogamistic marriage for money. Even if, by chance, the thing is unstable, there is still no reason for fear."

"You think this thing's all right, then?" Tom asked.

"Didn't say that," Pete smiled. "I don't think it's particularly immoral, but that doesn't say it's all right; I don't know. I haven't really thought it out. But what I am saying is that you can't just take over the old

ethics into the clan. We got to create a new code and we got to start from the bottom."

"I guess you're right," Tom said. He stared thoughtfully out the window for a moment. Then he shrugged and turned away. "But it doesn't help much," he added to himself as he wandered toward the dining room.

5

IT WAS after supper, when the dishes had all been washed and the children packed off to bed, that the clan gathered in the living-room. They had chatted for a short time, but all fell silent when Ricky got up. He went to the mantelpiece and, turning, announced: "I find that there are problems before the clan that require the mature consideration of the clan. I therefore request a caucus." The words were the ritual of the process, established through long custom, and the clan's by-laws.

Tom stood up and, with some ostentation, counted the people present. He then announced: "I find that there is present the full membership of the clan that is adult, and that has been accepted into responsibility for the clan. Also, there are no strangers present. I believe you may call a caucus." He sat down.

"We have the word of Tom," Ricky said. "Does anyone doubt that I may now call a caucus?" He looked around carefully. "Since no one seems to have a doubt, I do now declare that the clan is assembled in caucus, and ask Sandy to operate the recorder." Sandy reached over to a box sitting on a table and flipped a switch. She spoke into a microphone, giving the date and time, and then announced that the recorder was on.

Paul bounced up out of his chair. "What is the purpose of this caucus?" This, too, was ritual.

"I have called this caucus," Ricky said, "to ask the clan to consider the application for membership of Marcia Graves. It is my opinion that this question must be decided now, since various collateral problems of some urgency will be determined by our decision on this matter. Does anyone question this, or feel that the matter should not be considered at this time for any reason?" Although this was part of the established pattern of a caucus, he looked at Tom since the latter could, if he wished, protest the matter. Tom, however, smiled and barely shook his head.

"Since there is no objection," Ricky continued, looking slightly relieved, "I will summarize the situation as I see it.

"Marcia has requested admission to the clan. She has been instructed in what this means both legally, and — in so far as it can be described or codified — socially. I do not think it can be said that she does not know what she is doing. As regards the girl herself, all of you have met her, I think, several times. This, of course, is not sufficient to determine her fitness or compatibility. However, it is as much as can reasonably be done before decision.

"In accordance with the custom and the law, then, it is proposed that she be admitted on a conditional basis for a period of one year. During this time the clan may, by a majority vote in caucus, refuse her further membership. At the end of one year, in the absence of such a vote, she will be admitted to full membership and reciprocal obligations with the clan established. Subsequent severance of this relation can be accomplished only through the courts for due cause, and with due consideration of the equity of both parties." His voice was almost a monotone as he recited the formula.

"In the present case," he continued, his voice coming alive, "there are certain collateral problems. Marcia is the daughter of Mr. Graves, president of Eltron Electric. Mr. Graves has long been a Free-Trader, and Eltron Electric has never contracted with the clans. However, it is clear that, if his daughter becomes a clanswoman, then he can no longer maintain this aloofness towards the clan. Specifically, he has indicated he will be willing to contract the Vord clan for a desirable piece of work if we accept his daughter. It is my opinion that, if he can once be persuaded to contract a functioning-clan, then he will find this the desirable way to operate, and will therefore stop opposing the clans. He has had a continued history of labor-troubles, with strikes, absenteeism, high turnover, and all the rest. Once he has tried the clans, he will find they solve his worst headaches; he may well end up our best friend, almost no matter what happens to Marcia."

RICKY continued, "It is this matter of Graves that makes this matter urgent. Graves must decide in the next day or two how to handle this piece of work. He will either give it to us, or set up his own supervisory organization in this time. So we have to decide quickly. This, however, is not the only basis on which we should decide. It is one of them, and, I think, is a legitimately important one. But it is only one; we must also consider Marcia and the clan. She is one whose background

is not in this direction. Her father, as I said, is rather vigorously Free-Trading and Monogamistic. She is poorly prepared, psychologically, for clan life.

"And yet, she is sincere in wanting to join the clan. She has tried the other life and had it fail her. She hopes, in the clan, to find what she needs; and I think it quite possible that she may. I would not advocate this unless I thought she had at least a reasonable chance of succeeding.

"As regards the clan, this, I suppose, is something each of us will have to decide for ourselves. Personally, I think she has a lot to contribute. She is intelligent, well-educated, and she has had a lot of cultural experience that none of us have had. I think she could add much to the clan, if we can only integrate her in. But that 'if' is the question. And each of you will have to decide yourself what is the answer to it.

"But I think I have talked enough, here," he said. "I've told you my own point of view. I think it is time to listen to the other side." He looked at Tom, and waved his hand as if presenting him the floor.

Tom got to his feet. He looked around at all these faces so familiar to him. What should he say? he wondered. What did he want to say? He did not know; he felt confused. And this surprised him.

He looked at Ricky, and remembered their argument that afternoon. What was Ricky really after? he wondered. Was he just asking the clan to be opportunistic? To take Marcia in, just because of what the contract could do for them?

Or did he really think Marcia could fit? That she could learn to be a real part of them? Or, again, as he remembered Ricky's comment that she was a 'dish', had Ricky gone overboard about her? Was he so taken by her looks and all that he was forgetting the clan? Not consciously, of course; he would not, could not, do that consciously. But perhaps unknowing? Using the other arguments as rationalization?

Somehow, Tom doubted this. Ricky might not be too deep a thinker but, Tom thought, he was generally extremely level headed. No, he thought, Ricky was probably quite serious in thinking the clan should accept Marcia, that she, in one way or another, would be good for the clan. And that left only the question of whether he was right or not.

Tom's eyes swung to Sandy, and he remembered his discussion with her. And he remembered her parting shot which had asked him if he was afraid of Marcia. If, perhaps, he did not resent her for being better educated than he, and if, maybe, she might awe him. Was that it? he wondered. Did he feel awe at her? He did of her father, certainly. He remembered his talks with Mr. Graves, and remembered coming out

of them feeling beaten and bedraggled — something of the way he might feel towards Marcia.

Yes, he had to admit it, there was that feeling there. She was from a background he did not know and it did, in truth, somewhat scare him. How much did this influence him? He did not know.

He looked at Betsy, thinking of his talk with her. He remembered how she had brushed aside any thought that the kids might be harmed by Marcia. Was she right? Were the kids so stable emotionally that nothing Marcia could bring into their world would seriously harm them? Remembering Sue who had come to flirt with him with her four-year-old eyes, it was not hard to believe that Betsy was right.

Also there was Betsy's discussion of what might happen to Marcia. Betsy had argued, Tom remembered, that Marcia might well learn to fit, that she would find all the old rules by which she had lived outside the clan so completely inadequate that she would be forced to learn from scratch. Was that right, he wondered. After the initial period when she would be learning how little she knew, would she then be able to learn like a child, without undue prejudice, just because her background was so different? It was possible, he had to admit.

And finally he looked at Pete. Pete had argued that it was not immoral to take in Marcia for economic reasons, that it was not like marrying a girl for her money. Economics were an integral and avowed part of the clan idea; and certainly the moralities of a clan had to be different from those of a monogamist marriage. Yes, he had to admit that he thought Pete's arguments sound. There was a different ethics here. There had to be. What the true ethics would say of the case of Marcia, he did not know. But at least he could not lightly dismiss it all as simply and obviously immoral. It could not be that simple.

AS TOM looked at them and pondered what he should say, the answer suddenly came to him. It came to him like a revelation, and he felt as if something inside of him had broken, something that had hampered and restricted him, even without his knowing it. He felt free, suddenly, free and exultant.

He smiled at them and said: "When Ricky told me this afternoon, I was afraid; as I talked to several of you since that time, I continued to be afraid. And I was afraid when I came here tonight. But now, as I look at your bright faces, I am no longer. You and I are the clan, and the clan is stronger than anyone outside. Not Marcia, nor Graves, nor anyone else can break it; only we can break it — only we, by losing faith

in it. I know now that I have not had the faith that I should have. The faith in you, and in us, and in our relations to each other. As I stood here looking at the faces of those I talked to, and remembering what you said, it came to me how foolish I have been.

"I don't know whether this thing is right or not; I don't know what its ultimate result will be. Maybe it will be good, and maybe bad. But if it's bad, it won't be so bad as to be a disaster. The clan will survive anything that may come of it, and may even be the stronger for it. And if the results are good, why then of course everyone will be the winner for it. No, I don't know what the results will be, but now I am willing to face whatever they are without fear, and with confidence in the clan.

"My vote will be to accept Marcia." He sat down feeling quite at peace with himself for the first time in what seemed like a long, long time.

As Ricky came forward to take the floor again, and ask for further discussion, Tom looked around. Sandy, he saw, was looking at him with a smile in her eyes. She approved, he knew. And so did Betsy. She was watching him with a warm look that spoke her feelings. Pete was staring off into space, no doubt following down some logical train.

The others were each reacting in their separate ways. Paul was interested but probably had no idea of what it really was about. Rita, in her maternal self-absorption, was not really concerned. Polly was watching him with sympathy for him as a man, but not with any basic understanding. Sam, with his dead-pan face was hard to read. His penetrating eyes saw deeply, but what they saw was hard to tell. Herb was looking around him with awkward movements; he was probably feeling very shy at the thought of a new member. Marcia, Tom thought, might well be good for him, teach him a greater social finesse.

And there was Joan, leaning forward intently, no doubt wondering how Marcia would affect the artistic balance of the group. Mike was looking interested but not concerned. And Esther was sitting back in her chair with a vague smile on her lips. Probably, Tom thought with a mental chuckle, she was already planning some suitable induction ceremony.

From here on out, Tom sensed, it was only a matter of formality. Other discussion there would be; arguments, perhaps. But in the end, Marcia would be admitted by unanimous vote. And he was content that it be so.



A man may be a scoundrel, a crook, a high-phased confidence man, and still work toward a great dream which will be worth far more than the momentary damage his swindling cost.

Comet's Burial

by RAYMOND Z. GALLUN

OUTSIDE Tycho Station on the Moon, Jess Brinker showed Arne Copeland the odd footprints made in the dust by explorers from Mars, fifty million years ago. A man-made cover of clear plastic now kept them from being trampled.

"Who hasn't heard about such prints?" Copeland growled laconically. "There's no air or weather here to rub them out — even in eternity. Thanks for showing a fresh-arrived greenhorn around . . ."

Copeland was nineteen, tough, willing to learn, but wary. His wide mouth was usually sullen, his grey eyes a little narrowed in a face that didn't have to be so grim. Back in Iowa he had a girl. Frances. But love had to wait, for he needed the Moon the way Peary had once needed the North Pole.

Earth needed it, too — for minerals; as an easier jump-off point to the planets because of its weak gravity; as a place for astronomical observatories, unhampered by the murk of an atmosphere; as sites for labs experimenting in forces too dangerous to be conducted on a heavily-populated world, and for a dozen other purposes.

Young Copeland was ready for blood, sweat, and tears in his impulse to help conquer the lunar wastes. He sized up big, swaggering Jess Brinker, and admitted to himself that this man, who was at least ten years his senior, could easily be a phony, stalking suckers. Yet, Copeland reserved judgment. Like any tenderfoot anywhere, he needed an experienced man to show him the ropes.

He already knew the Moon intimately from books: A hell of silence, some of it beautiful: Huge ringwalls. Blazing sunlight, inky shadow. Grey plains, black sky. Blazing stars, with the great blurry bluish globe of Earth among them. You could yearn to be on the Moon, but you could go bats and die there, too — or turn sour, because the place was too rough for your guts.

Afield, you wore a spacesuit, and conversed by helmet radiophone. Otherwise you lived in rooms and holes dug underground, and sealed up. The scant water you dared use was roasted out of gypsum rock. The oxygen you breathed was extracted from lunar oxides by a chemical process. Then air-rejuvenator apparatus reassembled it from the carbon-dioxide you exhaled, so that you could use it over and over.

Copeland had read the tales: With that kind of frugality as the price of survival, lunar prospectors could turn selfish to the point of queer-ness. Afraid somebody might follow them to their mineral claims, they'd take more pains to leave as little spoor as possible than a fox being tracked by dogs.

"Speaking of how footprints last around here," Copeland remarked for the sake of conversation, "I understand you've got to be careful — stick to high ridges, and to parts of the flat *maria* where there's no old volcanic ash or dust of thermal erosion."

"Guys who do that are misers and old women, kid," Brinker scoffed. "Hell — it sure ain't because they're modest that they're so cautious! Me — I do things right."

He lifted a foot from the dust beside the path, revealing the mark of the specially etched steel sole of his spaceboot. A name was stamped across the print: **BRINKER**.

"I'm proud of where I've been and where I'm going — like a true explorer," the big man said. "Get some soles like mine made for yourself, fella, and come along with me."

Copeland was intrigued. "Let me think about it a little."

DURING the next few hours he heard quite a lot.

A big, blonde nurse — one of the two women in the sealed warrens of Tycho Station, said: "Young man, I love Jess Brinker. But keep away from him or you'll wind up in the prison pits, or worse."

And Copeland heard about Tom Brinker, Jess' dad — the kind of swindler always found in rough new territory, anywhere. He had promoted the idea of a real city on Lunar. Yeah — one with trees and flowers. What sentimental bait that was for home-starved, desolation-sick wanderers! No wonder somebody had murdered him recently.

By common opinion, twenty-odd years was the only difference between Jess and his father. "Stay clear," was the warning; the name of Brinker was mud and poison.

Arne Copeland was a cagey youngster; nobody influenced him when he made up his mind. He was no cow-eyed hero-worshipper; yet, on

his own, he kind of liked the large, battered, egotist. Copeland knew that he was an egotist himself. He also knew that merely to be on the sketchily-explored Moon was to take chances.

So he said "Okay," to Brinker, and got some metal boot-soles made, with his name etched into them in reverse, as in a rubber stamp.

Under packs that no coolie could ever have lifted against Earth gravity, they left Tycho Station and moved toward the fringe of that lunar hemisphere which is never seen from Terra — though it is no different from the visible half in general character.

Wherever their feet found a medium that would take an impression, they left their trademark behind them. Copeland could brush a name out with a glove; otherwise those names were about as permanent as if carved from granite, for there was no wind to blow the dust, and no rain to wash it away. Passing tractor-caravans would never blot out all of the footprints. Not in ages of time.

"At least we got us a monument, Jess," Copeland said once, feeling somewhat thrilled. "That's what guys out exploring and prospecting need. A legend. A reputation."

Jess Brinker's eyes narrowed, making him look sinister. "Yeah, Cope," he drawled. "But in my case it's a *counter*-reputation, with a little of Robin Hood thrown in, to help blow the stink of my Old Man off me. I want some friends and backing, so I can do what Dad really wanted to do — though he was as much of a rogue as a saint. You listening, Cope?"

Copeland kept his face stony. "Tell me what you want to, and then stop," he said softly.

"Thanks," Brinker answered. "It doesn't matter too much that I can guess who killed Pop, and would like to square things. Yeah, a hatchet-faced ex-partner who turned pious and legal on the outside, after he got the breaks. How old is that story, I wonder? . . . It doesn't even rile me terribly, knowing that Dad wasn't all crook, knowing he *believed* his idea was good for everybody, and was trying to get funds to put it across."

Brinker sighed and went on: "The idea is the *important* thing, Cope. A place with trees and flowers, a city, maybe — an antidote for the Moon's desolation. Anyone here feels the need in his bones and nerves. But it would take more air and water than could ever be imported, or drawn from the lunar crust. You wouldn't know it on the dead surface, but two hundred miles deep in the Moon there's still molten lava,

plentiful water in the form of steam, volcanic carbon-dioxide gas — the makings of oxygen. There's nitrogen, too.

"How to reach that stuff is the question. Drills break under the pressure of depth at a tenth of the distance. Pop's idea involved Brulow's Comet, which will be coming back sunward from far space in three years. Imagine — a comet! It could be dangerous, too; nobody could ever get permission for an attempt."

Brinker paused again. Copeland and he were plodding through a jagged valley. The stars were merciless pinpoints, the silence brittle and grating.

"But there must be a way of blasting down to those life-giving raw-materials, Cope," Brinker continued. "Maybe with atomic explosive. Experiments call for funds and backing. So I save my money, and wish I had a head for making it faster. And I look for weak spots in the lunar crust with radar. And I try to get people to know I'm around, and to like me . . ."

Copeland realized that what he had just heard could be a line of malarkey meant to kid a yokel, or a bid to get him involved in something. But he found himself kind of falling for the yarn. More than ever he suspected that folks were wrong about Jess Brinker; his warning instincts were being lulled to sleep.

MONTH-LONG lunar days passed, while the two men ranged over a segment of the hidden hemisphere. They trod plains and crater-walls unsullied by human feet before; they took photographs to be sold to the Lunar Topographical Commission; they located deposits of radioactive metals, which could be registered for investigation by an assaying party, and for possible royalties. Periodically they visited scattered supply stations, and then set out once more.

Such a life had its poisons even for Brinker and Copeland, who were braced for meeting the unknown and the strange.

Living in space suits for weeks at a time; smelling their own unwashed bodies; slipping an arm out of a heavy sleeve to draw food through a little airlock in their armor's chestplate; knowing, in spite of effective insulation, that the heat of day exceeded the boiling point of water, and that the cold of the protracted night, when usually they continued their explorations with the aid of ato-lamps, hovered at the brink of absolute zero — all those things had a harsh effect on nervous-systems.

They found two human corpses. One had been crushed in a long fall, his spacesuit ripped open; he was a blackened mummy. The other

was a freckled youth, confined in his armor. Failure of its air-rejuvenator unit had caused asphyxia. What you did for guys like this was collect their credentials for shipment home.

Copeland also found a Martian — inside its transparent version of a spacesuit, for the ancient Moon had been much the same as now. The being was dead, of course. Its brain-case had been a sac; its tentacles were like a snarl of age-hardened leather thongs.

Lying near it was an even greater rarity — the remains of a different sort of monster from the planet that had been literally exploded in a war with Mars, to form the countless fragments that were the asteroids. That much of remote history was already known from the research-expeditions that had gone out to the Red Planet, and beyond.

The queer, advanced equipment of these two beings from two small, swift-cooling worlds — which had borne life early, and whose cultures had rivalled briefly for dominance of the solar system until they had wiped each other out those fifty million years ago — lay scattered near them. It was still as bright and new as yesterday, preserved by the Moon's vacuum: Cameras, weapons, instruments — rich loot, now, to be sold to labs that sought to add the technology of other minds to human knowledge.

For a year, things went well. The names, BRINKER and COPELAND, footprinted into the lunar dust, helped build the new reputation that Brinker wanted. Copeland and he were a hard-working team; they covered more ground than any other Moon explorers.

The fights that Brinker got into with other toughs at the various supply stations, and never lost, added to the legend — that old Tom's son was savage and dangerous, but with a gentler side. For instance he once carried a crazed Moon-tramp, whom Copeland was too slight to have handled for a minute, fifty miles on his back to a station. Oh, sure — the stunt could be pure ballyhoo, not charity. But Copeland knew that more and more people had begun to admire his buddy.

Brinker never found a weak spot in the lunar crust. "It's always about two hundred miles deep, Cope," he said. "Lots thicker than Earth's shell, because the Moon, being smaller, cooled more. But don't worry; nothing is impossible. Soon I'll have enough money to make minor tests. And maybe enough friends for serious support."

Yeah — maybe it was all just a brain-bubble. But Copeland had seen enough of desolation to grind the spirit of the Brinker idea into his bones — even if he didn't think it was quite practical.

"I'll throw my dough in with yours, Jess," he said.

Their named bootprints helped build their fame as explorers; but there was a flaw and an invitation here which they both must have realized — and still faced as a calculated risk.

A LUNAR day later, they were plodding through the Fenwick mountains on the far hemisphere, when streams of bullets made lava chips fly.

As they flopped prone in the dust, a scratchy voice chuckled: "Hello, Brinker. Maybe you and your pal want my bunch to escort you back to Tycho Station. We might as well have the reward. Robbery of a minerals caravan and three killings, they say. It's terrible how you scatter your tracks around . . ."

Brinker grasped Copeland's wrist to form a sound-channel, so that they could converse without using their radiophones. "That was Krell talking," he said. "Dad's old partner."

Luckily, it was not many hours to sunset. The mountain ridges, slanting up to the peaks, cast inky shadows that could hide anything. Brinker was canny; while more bullets spurted, he led a dash back to a ridge-shadow that went clear to the range-crest. Even with bulky packs, climbing was a lot faster than on Earth, where things weigh six times as much.

So they got away, over the mountains. The black night of the far side of the Moon, where Earth never shines, hid them.

"Making boot-soles with our names on them," Brinker growled bitterly, using the radiophone at reduced range. "The crudest kind of frameup."

"Your Krell is quite a man," Copeland stated.

"He could have arranged all of it — sure," Brinker answered. "He knows I suspect that he finished Pop, so I'm dangerous to him. He might hate me, too, as part of my Old Man — sort of . . . Whatever it was he got sore about, originally — money or principle, no doubt . . . Besides, I don't think he wants the Moon to be a little more livable. It would encourage too many colonists to come, increase metals production, spoil prices, cheapen his claims. He's a corny man, with all the corny reasons . . ."

"He, and some of his guys, could have robbed and killed and left footprints like ours. But any other lugs, seeking someone else to blame for their crimes, could have done all that. If that is so, Krell has got me even *legally* — without blame to himself."

"Footprints!" Copeland snapped. "They're so obviously a frame

that it's silly; anyone could see that! Another thing — maybe Krell was kidding, scaring us by saying that we are wanted. Tell you what, Jess: In any case I won't seem as guilty as you; I'll go back alone to Tycho Station, and clear us both."

"You're an optimist, ain't you?" Brinker laughed. "Krell wasn't kidding; and in a rough place like the Moon, justice jumps to conclusions and gets mean, fast. Sure, the purpose of the footprints is obvious. But I've been fighting uphill against my Old Man's reputation for a long time. Who's gonna say I haven't backslid? What I want to accomplish is tough enough with everything in my favor."

Brinker's voice was now a sinister rumble with a quiver in it. Arne Copeland turned wary again; he had never lost entirely the deepseated notion that Brinker might cause him misfortune.

"So now what?" he demanded softly, flashing his ato-light beam against Brinker's face-window, so that he could see his expression. Copeland meant to forestall danger aggressively.

But as the darkness between them was swept aside, he also saw the muzzle of Brinker's pistol levelled at him. The bigger man's grin was lopsided. "I'd give you my neck, Cope," he rumbled. "But I'd give both our necks for you-know-what. Now, because that's all there's left, I'm gonna try it Pop's crazy way. You're gonna help. If you and I can last through a couple of years of *real* silence and solitude, it might have a chance. I got a ship hidden. Give me your gun. Easy! If you think I wouldn't shoot, you're a fool. Now I'll wire one of your wrists to mine; we've got a long march ahead."

SOME march it was! Copeland was fiercely independent. The warnings about Brinker had gone to waste; so had his own wariness. Bitterness made him savage. The harshness of the Moon still ached in his guts — he wanted the steam and gases of its interior tapped and used, yes — but by some reasonable means. Jess Brinker must be truly Moon-balmy, now. Desolation-nuts. Wild for the sight of growing things. Else how could he think seriously of using Brulow's Comet? Was it hard to guess how? Copeland knew that he and Brinker had courage, and willingness to work for a sound purpose. But to trade long effort and hardship in a proposition that courted suicide, even in its probable failure — and wide destruction if it managed to be successful — was worse than folly.

So, when these meanings became clear in his mind, he wrestled Brinker at every turn. Twice he almost won. He argued and cursed,

getting nowhere. He defied Brinker to shoot him. The big man didn't do that. But at last Brinker jabbed a hypodermic needle — part of the regulation medical kit — through the flexible rubberized fabric of the elbow-joint of Copeland's spacesuit, and into his arm.

Many hours later, and many miles farther into the mountainous country, Copeland awoke in a cavern with glassy walls, illuminated by Brinker's ato-light. Brinker stood near where he lay. He seemed just grimly good-humored.

"This is an old Martian supply depot, Cope," he offered. "I found it before I knew you, and I kept it in reserve for possible trouble, like now. I knew I could convert its contents to considerable money at any time. So it was like a bank-account, and a last resort, too. There's even a small Martian spaceship; only three others have ever been found, intact. I also cached some Earthly instruments here. You can bet I didn't leave any tracks for miles around."

Copeland's gaze caught the eerie gleam of the strange little craft. He saw the stacks of oddly-made boxes and bales. His hackles rose as he thought of a senseless plunge into unplumbed distance.

"Unwire my hands, Jess!" he coaxed again, trying to control fury. "Get wise! Damn you — you're more dangerous as an altruist than any crook could be!"

Brinker's laugh was sharp, but his eyes held real apology. "Want to help me ready and load the ship?" he said almost mildly. "No — I guess not; you aren't quite in a cooperative frame of mind, yet. I'll need you later. Sorry, but you're the only guy around, Cope."

Brinker blasted queer bulkheads out of the ship, in order to make it habitable for humans. The exit of the cavern had been masked with debris, but now he cleared it. He tossed Copeland aboard and took off into the lunar night.

THE vast journey lasted for months. Once Brinker said to his sullen, and again partially-drugged, captive: "Maybe in two years, if we're very lucky, we'll be back."

Hurting outward, they passed the orbits of Mars, the asteroids, Jupiter, and Saturn. There, with Earth-made instruments, Brinker located what he sought: Brulow's Comet.

So far from the sun, where the fluorescence-inducing radiations were thinned almost to nothing, it glowed hardly at all. And it had almost no tail; it was only a gigantic, tenuous ghost, with a core of stone and magnetic iron fragments.

Still dazed, Copeland thought about comets. Wanderers, following elongated orbits that loop tight around the sun at one end and plumb the depths of space at the other. Of all large forms moving through the void, they were the least dense. In coma and tail, they were only intensely rarefied and electrified gas. The great enigma about them was that things so deficient in mass and gravity could hold onto even that much atmosphere for long. Perhaps new gases were baked out of the meteoric core, each time a comet was close to the sun; maybe some of them even renewed their atmosphere periodically, by capturing a little of the tenuous substance of the solar corona, during their very near approaches to it.

Brulow's Comet was on the sunward swing, now, gaining speed under solar gravitation; but it still had a long ways to go. Brinker guided the ship down through its coma and toward its lazily-rotating nucleus, where thousands of fragments of iron and rock swirled around their common center of gravity.

The chunks clattered against the craft's metal hull, but did no damage at their low speed. Brinker brought the ship to rest at the center of the nucleus, where there was one solid mass of material a hundred yards in diameter.

"Well, we're here, Cope," Brinker said grimly. "We don't have to work right away — if you don't want to. We've got too much time."

Those two years looming ahead were the worst. If the Moon had been harsh, it was nothing to this eerie place. The heart of this small comet was illumined by faint, shifting phosphorescence, ranging from blue and tarnished silver to delicate if poisonous pink. Perhaps the cause was the same as that of the terrestrial aurora. The silence here was that of space; but the swirling motion of the nucleus suggested a continuous maddening rustle to Copeland.

He had to yield to Brinker's wishes. Toil might divert him some, keep him from feeling the tension of time and strangeness so much.

"Okay, Brinker," he said. "You win. Brulow's Comet is headed for a close approach to the Earth-Moon system. So you want to be spectacular, and shift it a little from its orbit — so that it will hit the Moon and maybe break its crust. Was that so hard to figure? That sounds pretty big, doesn't it? But I'll humor you. Let's see how far we get . . . Since we're here." His sarcasm was tired.

As a preliminary, they cut a cavern in the central mass of the nucleus with Martian blasters, and fitted it with a crude airlock. The

cavern would be better to live in than the interior of a ship meant for alien beings. They moved Martian apparatus and supplies into it: Air-rejuvenators, moisture-reclaimers, cylinders of oxygen and water, and containers of nourishment — all millions of years old.

Their remaining supply of Earthly food in their packs was now very short. It was weird — eating what had been preserved so long ago, on another world, for beings just barely close enough to human for their food to be edible. Gelatins, sectional fragments of vegetation, and what might have been muscle-tissue. Copeland and Brinker both gagged often. It wasn't the bland, oily taste so much, but the idea . . .

Some of it, Copeland decided, was not native Martian. It was more like terrestrial fish. And slabs of coarse meat might have been flesh of the last dinosaurs! Martians surely must have visited Earth briefly, though evidence there had long since weathered away.

WHILE the still-distant sun sent thin light into the comet, Brinker and Copeland removed the propulsion-tubes from the ship and welded them to the central chunk of the nucleus. They had a number of other spare jet-tubes. These they fastened to lesser masses.

Whenever, in the slow swirling of the nucleus, tubes pointed in the calculated proper direction at right angles to the comet's course, they were fired in long bursts. Thus, slowly, like a perfectly-balanced bank vault door moved by a finger, the mass of the comet — slight by volume, but still measuring many thousands of tons — was deflected in the opposite direction. Astrogation-instruments showed the shift. Copeland had expected such coarse deflection to be possible; still, it startled him — this was the moving of a celestial body!

"Just a little. — for now, Cope," Brinker said. "We'll leave the fine aiming for later. Meanwhile we've got to pass the time, stay as well as we can, and keep our heads on straight."

Sure — straight! If Brinker hadn't turned foolish before they had come, they wouldn't be out here at all. In a month they were already thinning down from malnutrition and strain. At first, thinking coldly, Copeland was sure they'd wilt and die long before they got near the Moon.

Then, as they managed to steady themselves some by the diversions of playing cards, and studying the intricacies of Martian equipment, he began to fear once more that Brinker might succeed in his efforts — but fail terribly in result.

Many times Copeland went over the same arguments, struggling

to speak calmly, and without anger: "I wonder if you realize it, Brinker — with enough velocity one large meteor carries more energy than a fission bomb. A whole comet would affect thousands of square miles of the lunar surface, at least. Smash equipment, kill men. And if the comet happened to miss the Moon and hit Earth —"

Sometimes Brinker's expression became almost fearful, as at an enormity. But then he'd turn stubborn and grin. "There's plenty of room to avoid hitting the Earth," he'd say. "On the Moon, astronomers will warn of the shifted orbit of Brulow's Comet in plenty of time for everybody to get out of danger. Most of what we've got to worry about now, is our lives, or jail . . ."

A moment later, as like as not, they'd be slamming at each other with fists. Copeland found it hard to contain his fury for the man who had brought him such trouble, and — without intent — was so determined to extend it to many others.

Brinker kept winning the scraps. But Copeland's ten-year age-advantage meant something when it came to enduring hardship and partial-starvation over a long period. They didn't weaken equally.

This levelling of forces was one thing that Copeland waited for. Another was that when Brulow's Comet was found to be off course, a ship might be sent to investigate. He never mentioned it, certainly; but once Brinker said: "I'm ready for what you're thinking, Cope. I've got weapons."

By then they spent much of their time in torpid sleep.

Another difficulty was that it was getting harder to keep one's mind consistently on the same track. Space, tribulation, and the months, were having their blurring effect.

Often, Copeland spent many hours in wistful reverie about his girl, Frances, in Iowa. Sometimes he hated all people — on Earth, Moon, and everywhere, and didn't care what happened to them. On other occasions Brinker's basic desire to lessen the desolation of the lunar scene looked supremely good to him — as of course it always had, in principle. Then, briefly and perhaps madly, he was Brinker's pal, instead of yearning to beat him to a pulp.

SOMEHOW, twenty months crept by, and the first spaceship hovered inquisitively close to Brulow's Comet. A shadow of his former self, Brinker crept out of the cavern to man his weapons. But like a famished beast seeking prey, Copeland followed him.

His victory, now, was almost easy. Then all he had to do was wait

to be picked up; the ship was coming nearer. Through the now much-brightened glow of the comet, it had ceased to be a planetlike speck reflecting sunlight, and showed its actual form.

Confusion whirled in Copeland's head; hunger gnawed in him. Yet he looked down at Brinker — poor Brinker, beaten unconscious inside his spacesuit. Brinker had tried to fight lifeless dreariness. Copeland, weak of body and fogged of mind, was now close to maudlin tears. Dreariness was the enemy — here as elsewhere. He tried to think; his stubborn nature mixed itself with splinters of reason, and seemed to make sense.

His twenty months of suffering out here had to be used — mean something — didn't it? It couldn't be just a futile blank. You had to follow a thing started through to the end, didn't you? Brinker wanted to improve the Moon, which certainly needed that. Okay — finish the job that had gone so far. Damn desolation everywhere! Fight it! Smash it! Sudden rage made Copeland's thin blood pound. Dimly he realized that he was driven by the same dreariness-disease that motivated Brinker. So what? Who cared about smashed lunar equipment, after all. And beside experience, prison would be paradise.

Copeland fired a Martian rocket-launcher, aiming behind the ship. He saw the blaze of atomic fission. Jets flaming, the craft fled.

In his phones he heard a voice that he remembered: "That you, Brinker? Trying your father's trick, eh? Idiot! You'll kill yourself, or be executed. And now you even shoot!"

Fury at Krell clinched Copeland's decision. He did not answer him. But when Brinker woke up he said savagely, without friendship or forgiveness, yet with cooperation: "We're on the same side, now. Let's aim Brulow's Comet."

Concentrating was hard, but they had their instruments and calculators. Velocity, position, and course of both comet and Moon had to be coordinated to make them arrive in the same place at the same moment. It was a problem in astrogation, but a comet was not as easily directed as a space ship. Copeland had once thought that the necessary fine guiding couldn't be done. The jet-system they had rigged in that inconveniently whirling nucleus was crude.

But one thing was in their favor; they had ample time. They could adjust their course with the jets, check with instruments, and re-adjust — again and again. Copeland found himself doing the vital part of the job; he was better at math than Brinker.

They still had plenty of Martian food left — for what it was worth

to human insides. Perhaps unified purpose and action brightened their outlook a little, helping their bodies. They could never work very long — even in the almost total absence of gravity. But — at least — their weakness wasn't increasing now.

During those last four months they drove several ships away. Earth and Moon swelled to spheres, ahead. Brulow's Comet lengthened its tail under increased solar light-pressure. Intensified radiation made its shifting colors glorious.

Brinker and Copeland lined their gigantic missile up on its target as perfectly as they could. Fifty hours before the crash was due, they smashed most of the jets. The remaining ones they tried, feebly, to refit into their ship, meaning thus to escape.

THREE Space Patrol craft showed up, and they had to man their weapons. Copeland hated to be an outlaw; but now he could not see effort brought to nothing. Brinker and he had survived so far, accomplishing much — far better results than he had expected; it made him surer that their purpose was generally sound.

More missiles were fired carefully — not to do damage, but to discourage the intruders; the latter were held at bay for another twelve hours. Copeland and Brinker left radio commands and threats unanswered, so it was hard for their opponents to get a fix on their position in the whirling nucleus.

Explosions blazed around them, but never very close. Masses of iron and stone were shattered and half vaporized, cooling subsequently to fine dust. The nucleus of Brulow's Comet expanded a bit under the battering that went on within it.

At an opportune moment, Copeland and Brinker clung to one of their jet-tubes and, gunning it very lightly, rode it from the central core-mass of the nucleus to a lesser meteor, and hid in a cleft. A dust-poll had concealed their change of position. And now, with so many other large meteors around them, they would be almost impossible to find.

They glimpsed the Patrol craft invading the heart of the comet. Men poured forth, struggling to set up jets in the hope of still deflecting this juggernaut from the Moon. But the comet was already much too close; before the setting-up was half completed it had to be abandoned. Still, the ships remained almost to the last.

Copeland wondered tensely if they'd ever go. His withered palms perspired.

"We could still yell for help — have them take us off," Brinker suggested when they had left. He spoke by sound-channel contact.

The Moon loomed huge and ugly ahead. Copeland gave it a scared glance, and then laughed grimly. "Ironie, that would be," he snapped. "No — we've got this jet to ride, and we're still at liberty."

From space, lashed to the flaming propulsion tube, they saw the crash happen. It was a terrific spectacle. Copeland's hopes now had jagged cracks of worry. The comet seemed to move slowly, its coma flattening over the Moon's spaceward hemisphere. There were blinding flashes as the chunks of its nucleus bit into the lunar crust, their energy of velocity converting largely to heat. Then dust masked the region of impact. The comet's tail collapsed over the Moon like a crumbling tower.

Copeland gulped. He saw that Brinker had gone limp — fainted. Weakness was enough to cause that; but the fact of a plan carried out had a shock in it, too.

Copeland worked the jury-rigged controls of the jet, continuing to decelerate. At spotty intervals, under the terrible thrust of reducing speed, he was unconscious, too.

THERE was no such thing as picking a landing-spot. Checking velocity soon enough, so close to the Moon, took all of the propulsion tube's power — so he just followed the comet down. Almost at a standstill at last, balanced on a streamer of flame, he toppled into hot dust. Feebly he worked to unlash himself from the tube. Brinker, jolted back to semi-consciousness, managed to do the same.

Weakened and spent, they could not even lift themselves against the slight lunar gravity for a while.

The darkness around them was Stygian. But as more dust settled, the sky cleared, and the normal stars of the lunar night blazed out. Their attention was drawn in one direction inevitably.

Red-hot lava glowed there, in scattered areas over what was clearly an extensive expanse of territory. White vaporous plumes spurted high above the ground, and against the sides of new-formed meteor-craters, a white layer was collecting.

Copeland staggered erect. "Frost and snow!" he stammered. "From volcanic steam! The first frost and snow on the Moon in a billion years! We've done it, Brinker! Brulow's Comet really did crack the thick lunar crust . . ."

He heard Brinker's grunt of premature enthusiasm.

The Patrol picked them up hours later, wandering dazedly. They were emaciated ghosts of men — almost skeletons in armor. They gave their names, but didn't really come to their senses until the prison doctor in Tycho Station treated them, and they had slept for a long time.

"Don't worry, fellas. Relax," he said — with fury in his eyes.

Other faces were grim.

At the speedy trial in Tycho Station, sharp-featured Krell was among many who flung accusations.

"In the impact-zone itself — an area a hundred miles across — mining installations and machinery of tremendous value were utterly destroyed," he said. "But lesser damage extends to a far wider circle. Thousands of claims have been buried in dust, till much of the far lunar hemisphere will have to be resurveyed. Luckily, miners and explorers were warned in time, and sought safety. But the charge of wholesale vandalism — terrible enough — does not stand alone. These men are to be remembered as accused robbers and murderers."

In rebuttal, Brinker's defiance was a little uncertain, as if under so much blame, he had lost his assurance.

"Men who know the Moon know that its barrenness is poison, and not right for people!" he growled. "I tried to change it with Brulow's Comet — when I had no success by other means. Anyway, Copeland is blameless. I forced him to help me."

Embittered, there was no warmth in Copeland for his older codefendant and jinx. Still, even without Brinker's attempt to shield him, he would have been loyal.

"During all important parts of mine and Jess Brinker's joint project," he told the court, "I was in full agreement with his purpose."

Their attorney accomplished one considerable victory before these angry people. The charge of previous murders and robbery was barred; it was admitted that footprints were easy to duplicate, and that the presence of some bearing the names of the guilty was unlikely.

Brinker got fifty years in the mine-pits, and Copeland thirty.

"You always figured I might get you in a jam, didn't you, Cope?" Brinker said. "I'll keep trying to fix that."

COPELAND found nothing to grin about, in a thirty-year sentence. It was goodbye wandering, goodbye girls, goodbye everything. He'd get out middle-aged, finished, and marked. He might as well stay another twenty with Brinker — complete a sour association with him.

Copeland had another recent jolt to brood over. A bunch of old letters from his Frances had been delivered to him. His inability to receive or answer any of them had brought the worst result. She had married another guy, and who could blame her?

Arne Copeland wanted to kill Brinker. Getting desolation-goofy, and dragging him into this mess.

But from Brinker's infuriating grin, Copeland caught a hot spark of hope, backed by reasoning.

Later, sweating in the penal mine-pits near Tycho Station, Brinker and Copeland still heard scraps of news.

Explorers moved back into the region where the comet had split the lunar crust. The rising columns of steam and gas were perhaps unspectacular phenomena in themselves. But there they were, ready to fill a tremendous need. The sleepy internal fires of the Moon were unlikely to be violent. Yet they would push vapors up to the surface here perhaps for centuries.

In balancing benefit against transient damage, was it necessary even to mention that deeper and richer mineral deposits had been laid bare for easy mining by the blast effect of the comet's downfall? All free men — good or bad, and of large or small holdings — were set to gain, Krell included. But better mines were a side-issue.

The prisoners soon heard how roofs of transparent, flexible plastic, brought in bundles like fabric, were being reared over that smashed-up region, to trap escaping volcanic vapors. One tentlike structure. Then another and another.

Here was ample water from volcanic steam, and vast quantities of carbon-dioxide from which ordinary air-rejuvenators could release breathable oxygen. Men who had lived so long in the lunar silence and barrenness, soon saw that these raw materials of life need not only be used locally, but could be piped anywhere.

"Folks have caught on, Cope," Brinker said. "They were a little desolation-balmy, too — hence on our side all the time. Now they'll feel better about my Old Man. There'll be more than one city, I'll bet — clusters of big, plastic air-bubbles, self-sealing against meteor-punctures, warmed inside at night by volcanic heat. It won't happen all at once, but it'll come. Seeds'll be planted, and houses built. Parts of the Moon won't look the same."

Krell's death was part of the turning tide. He was found in Tycho Station, head smashed by a boot-sole of metal; it was good that Brinker was in prison, because his name was printed into Krell's skull.

Who did it? Neither Brinker nor Copeland cared very much. Some wronged stooge of Krell's, no doubt. Let the forces of law figure out the details.

Things got really good for Copeland and Brinker after popular demand forced their vindication. They were feted, honored, praised, rewarded. All Earth knew of them, and feminine colonists arriving as part of a new phase of the Moon's development, shined up to them as heroes.

It is not to be said that they didn't enjoy the advantages of fame. Brinker said more than once: "Forget your Frances, Cope. Problems are easy, these days."

The time came when Copeland growled in answer: "Sure — too easy. Having a lot of pals after the need is gone. No — I'm not criticizing. Most folks are swell. But I'd like to make friends and maybe find love a little more naturally. I thought I'd stay on the Moon; now I think I'll shove off for Mars. People are going there; whole towns are being built, I understand. And there's plenty of room for a lunar tramp, with a prison-record, to get lost . . ."

Copeland chuckled at the end. His vagabond blood was singing. He was also pitching a come-on at Brinker, for he'd seen him with some letters while they were prisoners. Copeland had glimpsed the name and address of the writer: Dorothy Wells, the big nurse that Brinker had known at Tycho Station. She was in Marsport now.

"By gosh — I guess I'll go too, Cope!" Brinker rumbled.

Looking back, Brinker thought it sort of funny that they were pals. He laughed.



*The main trouble is that you'd never suspect anything was wrong;
you'd enjoy associating with slizzers, so long as you didn't know...*

The Slizzers

by JEROME BIXBY



THEY'RE all around us. I'll call them the *slizzers*, because they *sliz* people. Lord only knows how long they've been on Earth, and how many of them there are . . .

They're all around us, living with us. We are hardly ever aware of their existence, because they can *make* themselves look like us, and do most of the time; and if they can look like us, there's really no need for them to think like us, is there? People think and behave in so many cockeyed ways, anyhow. Whenever a *slizzer* fumbles a little in his impersonation of a human being, and comes up with a puzzling response, I suppose we just shrug and think. *He could use a good psychiatrist.*

So . . . you might be one. Or your best friend, or your wife or husband, or that nice lady next door.

They aren't killers, or rampaging monsters; quite the contrary. They need us, something like the way we'd need maple trees if it came to the point where maple syrup was our only food. That's why we're in no comic-book danger of being destroyed, any more than maple trees

would be, in the circumstances I just mentioned — or are, as things go. In a sense, we're rather well-treated and helped along a bit . . . the way we care for maple trees.

But, sometimes a man here and there will be careless, or ignorant, or greedy . . . and a maple tree will be hurt . . .

Think about that the next time someone is real nice to you. He may be a *slizzer* . . . and a careless one . . .

How long do we live?

Right. About sixty, seventy years.

You probably don't think much about that, because that's just the way things are. That's life. And what the hell, the doctors are increasing our lifespan every day with new drugs and things, aren't they?

Sure.

But perhaps we'd live to be about a *thousand*, if the *slizzers* left us alone.

Ever stop to think how little we know about why we live? . . . what it is that takes our structure of bones and coldcuts and gives it the function we call "life?"

Some mysterious life-substance or force the doctors haven't pinned down yet, you say — and that's as good a definition as any.

Well, we're maple trees to the *slizzers*, and that life-stuff is the sap we supply them. They do it mostly when we're feeling good — feeling really terrific. It's easier to tap us that way, and there's more to be had. (Maybe that's what makes so-called manic-depressives . . . they attract *slizzers* when they feel tip-top; the *slizzers* feed; and *floo-o-m* . . . depressive.)

Like I say, think about all this next time someone treats you just ginger-peachy, and makes you feel all warm inside.

So see how long that feeling lasts . . . and who is hanging around you at the time. Experiment. See if it doesn't happen again and again with the same people, and if you don't usually end up wondering where in hell your nice warm feeling went off to . . .

I FOUND out about the *slizzers* when I went up to Joe Arnold's apartment last Friday night.

Joe opened the door and let me in. He flashed me his big junior-exec's grin and said, "Sit, Jerry. I'll mix you a gin and. The others'll be along in awhile and we can get the action started."

I sat down in my usual chair. Joe had already fixed up the table . . . green felt top, ashtrays, coasters, cards, chips. I said, "If Mel — that's his

name, isn't it, the new guy? — if he starts calling wild games again when it comes his deal, I'll walk out. I don't like 'em." I looked at the drink Joe was mixing. "More gin."

Joe crimped half a lime into the glass. "He won't call any crazy stuff tonight. I told him that if he did, we wouldn't invite him back. He nearly ruined the whole session, didn't he?"

I nodded and took the drink. Joe mixes them right — just the way I like them. They make me feel good inside. "How about a little blackjack while we're waiting?"

"Sure. They're late, anyway."

I got first ace, and dealt. We traded a few chips back and forth — nothing exciting — and on the ninth deal Joe got blackjack.

He shuffled, buried a trey, and gave me an ace-down, duck-up.

"Hit me," I said contentedly.

Joe gave me another ace.

"Mama! . . . hit me again."

A four.

"Son," I told him, "you're in for a royal beating. Again."

A deuce.

Joe winced.

I turned up my hole ace and said, "Give me a sixth, you poor son. I can't lose."

A nine.

"Nineteen in six," I crowed. I counted up my bets: five dollars. "You owe me fifteen bucks!"

Then I looked up at him.

I'll repeat myself. You know that hot flush of pure delight, of high triumph, even of mild avarice that possesses you from tingling scalp to tingling toe when you've pulled off a doozy? If you play cards, you've been there. If you don't play cards, just think back to the last time someone complimented the pants off you, or the last time you clinched a big deal, or the last time a sweet kid you'd been hot after said, "Yes."

That's the feeling I mean . . . the feeling I had.

And Joe Arnold was eating it.

I knew it, somehow, the moment I saw his eyes and hands. His eyes weren't Joe Arnold's blue eyes any longer. They were wet balls of shining black that took up half his face, and they looked hungry. His arms were straight out in front of him; his hands were splayed tensely about a foot from my face. The fingers were thinner and much longer than I could recall Joe's being, and they just *looked like*

antennae or electrodes or something, stretched wide-open that way and quivering, and I just *knew* that they were picking up and draining off into Joe's body all the elation, the excitement, the warmth that I felt.

I looked at him and wondered why I couldn't scream or move a muscle.

"Guess I made a boo-boo," he said. He blinked his big black globes of eyes. "No harm done, though."

His head had thinned down, just like his fingers, and now came to a peak on top.

He had practically no shoulders. He smiled at me, and I saw long black hair growing on the insides of his lips.

What are you? I screamed at him to myself.

Joe licked his hairy lips and folded those long inhuman hands in front of him.

"It hurts like hell," he said in a not-human voice, "to be *slizzing* you and then have you chill off on me that way, Jerry. But it's my own fault, I guess."

THE door-bell rang — two soft tones. Joe got up and let in the other members of our Friday night poker group. I tried to move and couldn't.

Fred raised his eyebrows when he saw Joe's face and hands. "Jerry isn't here yet? Relaxing a little?" Then he saw me sitting there and whistled. "Oh, you slipped up, eh?"

Joe nodded. "You were late, and I was hungry, so I thought I'd go ahead and take my share. I gave him a big kick, and he really poured it out . . . radiated like all hell. I took it in so fast that I *fluhped* and lost my plasmic control."

"We might as well eat now, then," Ray said, "before we get down to playing cards." He sat down across the table, his eyes — now suddenly enormous and black — eagerly on me. "I hate like hell waiting until you deal him a big pot —"

"No," Joe said sharply. "Too much at one time, and he'd wonder what hit him. We'll do it just like always . . . one of us at a time, and only a little at a time. Get him when he rakes in the loot. They never miss it when they feel like that."

"He's right," Fred said. "Take it easy, Ray." He went over to the sideboard and began mixing drinks.

Joe looked down at me with his black end-of-eggplant eyes.

"Now to fix things," he said.

... I blinked and shook my head. "You owe me fifteen bucks!" I said. "Lord," Joe wailed, "did this gonif just take me!"

Ray groaned sympathetically from the chair across the table, where he'd been watching the slaughter. "And how!"

Joe pushed fifteen blue chips at me. I began stacking them. "Well, that's life," I grinned. Then I shook my head again. "It's the damndest thing..."

"What?" Fred asked. He'd been over at the sideboard mixing drinks for the gang while I'd taken Joe over the bumps. Now he brought the tray over and shoved a tall one into Joe's hand. "Don't cry, Joe. What's the damndest thing, Jerry?"

"You know... that funny feeling that you've been some place before — the same place, the same people, saying the same things — but you can't remember where the hell or when, for the life of you. Had it just a moment ago, when I told Joe he owed me fifteen bucks. What do they call it again?"

"*Deja vu*," said Allen, who's sort of the scholarly type. "Means 'seen before' in French, I think. Or something like that."

"That's right," I said. "*Deja vu*... it's the damndest funniest feeling. I guess people have it all the time, don't they?"

"Yes," Allen said.

Then he paused. "People do."

"Wonder what causes it?"

Joe's blue eyes were twinkling. "Dunno. The psychologists have an explanation for it, but it's probably wrong."

"Wrong why?" Knowing Joe, I expected a gag. I got it.

"Well," Joe said. "Let me make up a theory. H'm... hoo, hah... well, it's like *this*: there are monsters all around us, see, but we don't know they're monsters except that every once in a while one of them slips up in his disguise and shows himself for what he really is. But *this* doesn't bother our monsters. They simply reach into our minds and twiddle around and — zoop! — you're right back where you were before the slip was —"

"Very funny," Fred said boredly. "Maybe losing fifteen bucks made you lose a little sense, Joe. You wouldn't want to lose more than fifteen bucks, would you? You need some caution in the games we play, no? So cut the nonsense and let's run 'em."

Ray licked his lips. "Yeah. Let's play, huh, fellows?"

Ray's always eager to get started.

WE PLAYED until 3 A.M. I won forty-six dollars. (I usually do win . . . I guess over a period of six months or so I'm about five-hundred bucks ahead of the game. Which is why I like to play over at Joe's, even though I am always so damned tired when I leave. Guess I'm not as young as I was.)

Sometimes I wonder why the odds go my way, right down the line. I almost never lose. But, hell, it *must* be an honest game . . . and if they're willing to go on losing to "Lucky" Bixby, I'm perfectly willing to go on winning.

After all, can you think of any reason that makes any sense for someone to rig a game week after week to let you win?

Frederik Boles, Author's Agent

Oct. 20

2200 Fifth Avenue

New York, N. Y.

Dear Fred,

Well, here's a new story. I've cleared it with Joe . . . he says it's okay to use his name; you know his sense of humor. I've used your name, too, but you can change it if you want to, being the shy retiring sort you are.

Frankly, I'm a little dubious about the yarn. It's the result of last Friday's poker-session . . . I actually did have the *deja vu* sensation, as you'll recall. On the way home I stopped in to pick up a chaser, feeling tired as all hell (like I always do — these long grinds are too much for me, I guess, just like the guy in the story) and the idea came to me to slap the old "we are fodder" angle into the thing as it happened and write it up.

But it's still an old plot. And one angle is left unexplained: how is the narrator able to know all about the *slizzers* and write about them after Joe gives him the *deja vu* treatment?

Well, maybe the readers won't mind. I've gotten away with bigger holes than that. Try it on Bob Lowndes . . . I still owe him on that advance. It's up his alley, hope-a-hope.

Jerry

Oct. 22, 1952

Jerome Bixby

862 Union Street

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dear Jerry,

I don't go for "The Slizzers." It just ain't convincing. As you say, it's

an old idea . . . and besides — again as you say — how does the narrator know what happened?

The manuscript looks good in my wastebasket. Forget about it.
Sympathies.

Fred

Oct. 23, 1952

Frederik Boles, Author's Agent
2200 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Dear Wet Blanket (and aren't you a little old for that?)

Respectfully nuts to you. After proper browbeating I think I'll try the yarn on Lowndes . . . it's no masterpiece, but I think it's got a chance; he likes an off trail bit, now and then. I made a carbon, natch, so your ditching of the original comes to naught.

Funny thing . . . every time I read it over I get the doggonedest *deja vu* feeling. Real dynamic thing . . . almost lifts my hair. Hope it does the same for the readers, them as can read. Maybe Joe didn't quite do the job of making me forget what happened that night, ha, ha. Say! . . . maybe that could explain the *narrator's* remembering what happened . . . or maybe — hey! A *real* idea!

Remember Joe's kidding us about monsters? — remember, you got a little sore because he was holding up the game, you money-hungry son? I think I'll rewrite the ending to include that! . . . which oughta take care of the narrator's remembering: Joe can be sort of a dopey *slizzer*, a blat-mouth, and his screwy theory (which is *true* in the story, or will be when I write it in — say, isn't this involved!) can trigger our hero's memory just a bit, shake the block a mite, undiddle the synapses. etc . . . and then I'll have you, platinum-butt, step in to head Joe off, under pretense of a poker itch.

You know, it's wonderful the way there are hot story ideas in plain old everyday things! S'long . . . gonna revise.

Jerry



Oct. 23, 1952

Mr. Robert W. Lowndes
COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc.
241 Church Street,
New York 13, New York
MASTER,

Herewith a story, "The Slizzers," which Fred and I don't quite see eye to eye on. He thinks it stinks on ice. I'm sure you will disagree to the tune of nice money.

J.

ENCL: THE SLIZZERS

1952 OCT 24 AM 9 06

NB168 PD=NEW YORK NY 63 110B=
JEROME BIXBY=
862 UNION ST APT 6H=
BKLYN=
JERRY=

URGE STRONGLY THAT YOU DON'T TRY TO SELL SLIZZERS
STOP IT'S JUST NO DAMN GOOD STOP YOU'VE GOT YOUR
REPUTATION TO THINK OF STOP WHY LOUSE UP YOUR GOOD
NAME WITH A LEMON AT THIS LATE DATE STOP KILL IT
STOP I'VE TALKED IT OVER WITH JOE AND HE ISN'T FEEL-
ING HUMOROUS ANY MORE STOP PREFERS NOT TO HAVE
NAME USED STOP REPEAT KILL THE THING FOR YOUR
OWN GOOD=

FRED

1952 OCT 24 AM 11 14

KL300 PD=NEW YORK NY 12 604B=
JEROME BIXBY=
862 UNION ST APT 6H=
BKLYN=
SON=

LIKE SLIZZERS STOP PREPOSTEROUS BUT CUTE STOP DIS-
AGREE WITH FRED TO THE TUNE OF NICE MONEY BUT
NICE MONEY STAYS IN MY POCKET STOP YOU NOW OWE ME
ONLY FIFTY DOLLARS OF ADVANCE AUGUST 16 STOP DO I
HEAR A SCREAM POOR BOY=

BOB

Oct. 24, 1952

Frederik Boles, Author's Agent
2200 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.
Dear Fred,

Your telegram came too late, and besides, the hell with it. Sent the yarn to Bob yesterday (groceries and rent wait for no man, you know) and he bought it, like the sensitive and discerning editor he is. What're you and Joe getting your tails in an uproar about? It's only a gag, so relax. Joe'll change his mind when he sees his name in print.

Would like to have included another angle, by the way: if the narrator's amnesia-job *had* been botched, wouldn't the *slizzers* decide pretty damn quick that he was a menace to them and get rid of him? Think I'll send Bob a line or two to stick on the end . . . you know, the old incomplected sentence deal . . . just as if, while the narrator was finishing the story, the *slizzers* came in and



It's well established now that the way you put a question often determines not only the answer you'll get, but the type of answer possible. So . . . a mechanical answerer, geared to produce the ultimate revelations in reference to anything you want to know, might have unsuspected limitations.

Ask A Foolish Question

by ROBERT SHECKLEY



ANSWERER was built to last as long as was necessary — which was quite long, as some races judge time, and not long at all, according to others. But to Answerer, it was just long enough.

As to size, Answerer was large to some and small to others. He could be viewed as complex, although some believed that he was really very simple.

Answerer knew that he was as he should be. Above and beyond all else, he was The Answerer. He Knew.

Of the race that built him, the less said the better. They also Knew, and never said whether they found the knowledge pleasant.

They built Answerer as a service to less-sophisticated races, and departed in a unique manner. Where they went only Answerer knows. Because Answerer knows everything.

Upon his planet, circling his sun, Answerer sat. Duration continued,

long, as some judge duration, short as others judge it. But as it should be, to Answerer.

Within him were the Answers. He knew the nature of things, and why things are as they are, and what they are, and what it all means.

Answerer could answer anything, provided it was a legitimate question. And he wanted to! He was eager to!

How else should an Answerer be?

What else should an Answerer do?

So he waited for creatures to come and ask.

"How do you feel, sir?" Morran asked, floating gently over to the old man.

"Better," Lingman said, trying to smile. No-weight was a vast relief. Even though Morran had expended an enormous amount of fuel, getting into space under minimum acceleration, Lingman's feeble heart hadn't liked it. Lingman's heart had balked and sulked, pounded angrily against the brittle rib-case, hesitated and sped up. It seemed for a time as though Lingman's heart was going to stop, out of sheer pique.

But no-weight was a vast relief, and the feeble heart was going again.

Morran had no such problems. His strong body was built for strain and stress. He wouldn't experience them on this trip, not if he expected old Lingman to live.

"I'm going to live," Lingman muttered, in answer to the unspoken question. "Long enough to find out." Morran touched the controls, and the ship slipped into sub-space like an eel into oil.

"We'll find out," Morran murmured. He helped the old man unstrap himself. "We're going to find the Answerer!"

Lingman nodded at his young partner. They had been reassuring themselves for years. Originally it had been Lingman's project. Then Morran, graduating from Cal Tech, had joined him. Together they had traced the rumors across the solar system. The legends of an ancient humanoid race who had known the answer to all things, and who had built Answerer and departed.

"Think of it," Morran said. "The answer to everything!" A physicist, Morran had many questions to ask Answerer. The expanding universe; the binding force of atomic nuclei; novae and supernovae; planetary formation; red shift, relativity and a thousand others.

"Yes," Lingman said. He pulled himself to the vision plate and looked out on the bleak prairie of the illusory sub-space. He was a biologist and an old man. He had two questions.

What is life?

What is death?

AFTER a particularly-long period of hunting purple, Lek and his friends gathered to talk. Purple always ran thin in the neighborhood of multiple-cluster stars — why, no one knew — so talk was definitely in order.

"Do you know," Lek said, "I think I'll hunt up this Answerer." Lek spoke the Oligrat language now, the language of imminent decision.

"Why?" Ilm asked him, in the Hvest tongue of light banter. "Why do you want to know things? Isn't the job of gathering purple enough for you?"

"No," Lek said, still speaking the language of imminent decision. "It is not." The great job of Lek and his kind was the gathering of purple. They found purple imbedded in many parts of the fabric of space, minute quantities of it. Slowly, they were building a huge mound of it. What the mound was for, no one knew.

"I suppose you'll ask him what purple is?" Ilm asked, pushing a star out of his way and lying down.

"I will," Lek said. "We have continued in ignorance too long. We must know the true nature of purple, and its meaning in the scheme of things. We must know why it governs our lives." For this speech Lek switched to Ilgret, the language of incipient-knowledge.

Ilm and the others didn't try to argue, even in the tongue of arguments. They knew that the knowledge was important. Ever since the dawn of time, Lek, Ilm and the others had gathered purple. Now it was time to know the ultimate answers to the universe — what purple was, and what the mound was for.

And of course, there was the Answerer to tell them. Everyone had heard of the Answerer, built by a race not unlike themselves, now long departed.

"Will you ask him anything else?" Ilm asked Lek.

"I don't know," Lek said. "Perhaps I'll ask about the stars. There's really nothing else important." Since Lek and his brothers had lived since the dawn of time, they didn't consider death. And since their numbers were always the same, they didn't consider the question of life.

But purple? And the mound?

"I go!" Lek shouted, in the vernacular of decision-to-fact.

"Good fortune!" his brothers shouted back, in the jargon of greatest-friendship.

Lek strode off, leaping from star to star.

Alone on his little planet, Answerer sat, waiting for the Questioners. Occasionally he mumbled the answers to himself. This was his privilege. He Knew.

But he waited, and the time was neither too long nor too short, for any of the creatures of space to come and ask.

THERE were eighteen of them, gathered in one place.

"I invoke the rule of eighteen," cried one. And another appeared, who had never before been, born by the rule of eighteen.

"We must go to the Answerer," one cried. "Our lives are governed by the rule of eighteen. Where there are eighteen, there will be nineteen. Why is this so?"

No one could answer.

"Where am I?" asked the newborn nineteenth. One took him aside for instruction.

That left seventeen. A stable number.

"And we must find out," cried another, "Why all places are different, although there is no distance."

That was the problem. One is here. Then one is there. Just like that, no movement, no reason. And yet, without moving, one is in another place.

"The stars are cold," one cried.

"Why?"

"We must go to the Answerer."

For they had heard the legends, knew the tales. "Once there was a race, a good deal like us, and they Knew — and they told Answerer. Then they departed to where there is no place, but much distance."

"How do we get there?" the newborn nineteenth cried, filled now with knowledge.

"We go." And eighteen of them vanished. One was left. Moodily he stared at the tremendous spread of an icy star, then he too vanished.

"Those old legends are true," Morran gasped. "There it is."

They had come out of sub-space at the place the legends told of, and before them was a star unlike any other star. Morran invented a classification for it, but it didn't matter. There was no other like it.

Swinging around the star was a planet, and this too was unlike any

other planet. Morran invented reasons, but they didn't matter. This planet was the only one.

"Strap yourself in, sir," Morran said. "I'll land as gently as I can."

Lek came to Answerer, striding swiftly from star to star. He lifted Answerer in his hand and looked at him.

"So you are Answerer," he said.

"Yes," Answerer said.

"Then tell me," Lek said, settling himself comfortably in a gap between the stars, "Tell me what I am."

"A partiality," Answerer said. "An indication."

"Come now," Lek muttered, his pride hurt. "You can do better than that. Now then. The purpose of my kind is to gather purple, and to build a mound of it. Can you tell me the real meaning of this?"

"Your question is without meaning," Answerer said. He knew what purple actually was, and what the mound was for. But the explanation was concealed in a greater explanation. Without this, Lek's question was inexplicable, and Lek had failed to ask the real question.

Lek asked other questions, and Answerer was unable to answer them. Lek viewed things through his specialized eyes, extracted a part of the truth and refused to see more. How to tell a blind man the sensation of green?

Answerer didn't try. He wasn't supposed to.

Finally, Lek emitted a scornful laugh. One of his little stepping-stones flared at the sound, then faded back to its usual intensity.

Lek departed, striding swiftly across the stars.

Answerer knew. But he had to be asked the proper questions first. He pondered this limitation, gazing at the stars which were neither large nor small, but exactly the right size.

The proper questions. The race which built Answerer should have taken that into account, Answerer thought. They should have made some allowance for semantic nonsense, allowed him to attempt an unravelling.

Answerer contented himself with muttering the answers to himself.

EIGHTEEN creatures came to Answerer, neither walking nor flying, but simply appearing. Shivering in the cold glare of the stars, they gazed up at the maspiveness of Answerer.

"If there is no distance," one asked, "Then how can things be in other places?"

Answerer knew what distance was, and what places were. But he couldn't answer the question. There was distance, but not as these creatures saw it. And there were places, but in a different fashion from that which the creatures expected.

"Rephrase the question," Answerer said hopefully.

"Why are we short here," one asked, "And long over there? Why are we fat over there, and short here? Why are the stars cold?"

Answerer knew all things. He knew why stars were cold, but he couldn't explain it in terms of stars or coldness.

"Why," another asked, "Is there a rule of eighteen? Why, when eighteen gather, is another produced?"

But of course the answer was part of another, greater question, which hadn't been asked.

Another was produced by the rule of eighteen, and the nineteen creatures vanished.

Answerer mumbled the right questions to himself, and answered them.

"We made it," Morran said. "Well, well." He patted Lingman on the shoulder — lightly, because Lingman might fall apart.

The old biologist was tired. His face was sunken, yellow, lined. Already the mark of the skull was showing in his prominent yellow teeth, his small, flat nose, his exposed cheekbones. The matrix was showing through.

"Let's get on," Lingman said. He didn't want to waste any time. He didn't have any time to waste.

Helmeted, they walked along the little path.

"Not so fast," Lingman murmured.

"Right," Morran said. They walked together, along the dark path of the planet that was different from all other planets, soaring alone around a sun different from all other suns.

"Up here," Morran said. The legends were explicit. A path, leading



to stone steps. Stone steps to a courtyard. And then — the Answerer!

To them, Answerer looked like a white screen set in a wall. To their eyes, Answerer was very simple.

Lingman clasped his shaking hands together. This was the culmination of a lifetime's work, financing, arguing, ferreting bits of legend, ending here, now.

"Remember," he said to Morran, "We will be shocked. The truth will be like nothing we have imagined."

"I'm ready," Morran said, his eyes rapturous.

"Very well. Answerer," Lingman said, in his thin little voice, "What is life?"

A voice spoke in their heads. "The question has no meaning. By 'life,' the Questioner is referring to a partial phenomenon, inexplicable except in terms of its whole."

"Of what is life a part?" Lingman asked.

"This question, in its present form, admits of no answer. Questioner is still considering 'life,' from his personal, limited bias."

"Answer it in your own terms, then," Morran said.

"The Answerer can only answer questions," Answerer thought again of the sad limitation imposed by his builders.

Silence.

"Is the universe expanding?" Morran asked confidently.

"'Expansion' is a term inapplicable to the situation. Universe, as the Questioner views it, is an illusory concept."

"Can you tell us *anything*?" Morran asked.

"I can answer any valid question concerning the nature of things."

THE two men looked at each other.

"I think I know what he means," Lingman said sadly. "Our basic assumptions are wrong. All of them."

"They can't be," Morran said. "Physics, biology —"

"Partial truths," Lingman said, with a great weariness in his voice. "At least we've determined that much. We've found out that our inferences concerning observed phenomena are wrong."

"But the rule of the simplest hypothesis —"

"It's only a theory," Lingman said.

"But life — he certainly could answer what life is?"

"Look at it this way," Lingman said. "Suppose you were to ask, 'Why was I born under the constellation Scorpio, in conjunction with Saturn?'"

I would be unable to answer your question in terms of the zodiac, because the zodiac has nothing to do with it."

"I see," Morran said slowly. "He can't answer questions in terms of our assumptions."

"That seems to be the case. And he can't alter our assumptions. He is limited to valid questions — which imply, it would seem, a knowledge we just don't have."

"We can't even ask a valid question?" Morran asked. "I don't believe that. We must know some basics." He turned to Answerer. "What is death?"

"I cannot explain an anthropomorphism."

"Death an anthropomorphism!" Morran said, and Lingman turned quickly. "Now we're getting somewhere!"

"Are anthropomorphisms unreal?" he asked.

"Anthropomorphisms may be classified, tentatively, as, A, false truths, or B, partial truths in terms of a partial situation."

"Which is applicable here?"

"Both."

That was the closest they got. Morran was unable to draw any more from Answerer. For hours the two men tried, but truth was slipping farther and farther away.

"It's maddening," Morran said, after a while. "This thing has the answer to the whole universe, and he can't tell us unless we ask the right question. But how are we supposed to know the right question?"

Lingman sat down on the ground, leaning against a stone wall. He closed his eyes.

"Savages, that's what we are," Morran said, pacing up and down in front of Answerer. "Imagine a bushman walking up to a physicist and asking him why he can't shoot his arrow into the sun. The scientist can explain it only in his own terms. What would happen?"

"The scientist wouldn't even attempt it," Lingman said, in a dim voice; "he would know the limitations of the questioner."

"It's fine," Morran said angrily. "How do you explain the earth's rotation to a bushman? Or better, how do you explain relativity to him — maintaining scientific rigor in your explanation at all times, of course."

Lingman, eyes closed, didn't answer.

"We're bushmen. But the gap is much greater here. Worm and superman, perhaps. The worm desires to know the nature of dirt, and why there's so much of it. Oh, well."

"Shall we go, sir?" Morran asked. Lingman's eyes remained closed. His taloned fingers were clenched, his cheeks sunk further in. The skull was emerging.

"Sir! Sir!"

And Answerer knew that that was not the answer.

ALONE on his planet, which is neither large nor small, but exactly the right size, Answerer waits. He cannot help the people who come to him, for even Answerer has restrictions.

He can answer only valid questions.

Universe? Life? Death? Purple? Eighteen?

Partial truths, half-truths, little bits of the great question.

But Answerer, alone, mumbles the questions to himself, the true questions, which no one can understand.

How could they understand the true answers?

The questions will never be asked, and Answerer remembers something his builders knew and forgot.

In order to ask a question you must already know most of the answer.



Now, if the animal we know as a cow were to evolve into a creature with near-human intelligence, so that she thought of herself as a "person" . . .

Riya's Foundling

by ALGIS BUDRYS



THE loft of the feed-house, with its stacked grainsacks, was a B-72, a fort, a foxhole — any number of things, depending on Phildee's moods.

Today it was a jumping-off place.

Phildee slipped out of his dormitory and ran across the yard to the feed-house. He dropped the big wooden latch behind him, and climbed up the ladder to the loft, depending on the slight strength of his young arms more than on his legs, which had to be lifted to straining heights before they could negotiate the man-sized rungs.

He reached the loft and stood panting, looking out over the farm through the loft door, at the light wooden fences around it, and the circling antenna of the radar tower.

Usually, he spent at least a little time each day crouched behind the grain-sacks and being bigger and older, firing coolly and accurately into charging companies of burly, thick-lipped UES soldiers, or going over

on one wing and whistling down on a flight of TT-34's that scattered like frightened ducks before the fiery sleet of his wing rockets.

But today was different, today there was something he wanted to try.

He stood up on his toes and searched. He felt the touch of Miss Cowan's mind, no different from that of anyone else — flat, unsystematic.

He sighed. Perhaps, somewhere, there was someone else like himself. For a moment, the fright of loneliness invaded him, but then faded. He took a last look at the farm, then moved away from the open door, letting his mind slip into another way of thinking.

His chubby features twisted into a scowl of concentration as he visualized reality. The scowl became a deeper grimace as he negated that reality, step by step, and substituted another.

F is for Phildee.

O is for Out.

R is for Reimann.

T is for Topology.

H is for heartsick hunger.

Abruptly, the Reimann fold became a concrete visualization. As though printed clearly in and around the air, which was simultaneously both around him and not around him, which existed/not existed in spacetime, he saw the sideslip diagram.

He twisted.

SPRING had come to Riya's world; spring and the thousand sounds of it. The melted snow in the mountaintops ran down in traceries of leaping water, and the spring crests raced along the creeks into the rivers. The riverbank grasses sprang into life; the plains turned green again.

Riya made her way up the path across the foothills, conscious of her shame. The green plain below her was dotted, two by two, with the figures of her people. It was spring, and Time. Only she was alone.

There was a special significance in the fact that she was here on this path in this season. The plains on either side of the brown river were her people's territory. During the summer, the couples ranged over the grass until the dams were ready to drop their calves. Then it became the bulls' duty to forage for their entire families until the youngsters were able to travel south to the winter range.

Through the space of years, the people had increased in numbers, the pressure of this steady growth making itself felt as the yearlings

filled out on the winter range. It had become usual, as the slow drift northward was made toward the end of winter, for some of the people to split away from the main body and range beyond the gray mountains that marked the western limits of the old territories. Since these wanderers were usually the most willful and headstrong, they were regarded as quasi-outcasts by the more settled people of the old range.

But — and here Riya felt the shame pierce more strongly than ever — they had their uses, occasionally. Preoccupied in her shame, she involuntarily turned her head downward, anxious that none of the people be staring derisively upward at the shaggy brown hump of fur that was she, toiling up the path.

She was not the first — but that was meaningless. That other female people had been ugly or old, that the same unforgotten force that urged her up the mountain path had brought others here before her, meant only that she was incapable of accepting the verdict of the years that had thinned her pelt, dimmed her eyes, and broken the smooth rhythm of her gait.

In short, it meant that Riya Sair, granddam times over, spurned by every male on the old range, was willing to cross the gray mountains and risk death from the resentful wild dams for the thin hope that there was a male among the wildlings who would sire her calf.

She turned her head back to the path and hurried on, cringing in inward self-reproach at her speed.

Except for her age, Riya presented a perfect average of her people. She stood two yards high and two wide at the shoulders, a yard at the haunches, and measured three and a half yards from her muzzle to the rudimentary tail. Her legs were short and stumpy, cloven-hooved. Her massive head hung slightly lower than her shoulders, and could be lowered to within an inch or two of the ground. She was herbivorous, ruminant, and mammalian. Moreover, she had intelligence — not of a very high order, but adequate for her needs.

From a Terrestrial point of view, none of this was remarkable. Many years of evolution had gone into her fashioning — more years for her one species than for all the varieties of man that have ever been. Nevertheless, she did have some remarkable attributes.

It was one of these attributes that now enabled her to sense what happened on the path ahead of her. She stopped still, only her long fur moving in the breeze.

PHILDEE — five, towheaded, round faced, chubby, dressed in a slightly grubby corduroy oversuit, and precocious — had his attributes, too. Grubby and tousled; branded with a thread of licorice from one corner of his mouth to his chin; involved in the loss of his first milk-tooth, as he was — he nevertheless slipped onto the path on Riya's world, the highest product of Terrestrial evolution. Alice followed a white rabbit down a hole, Phildee followed Reimann down into a hole that, at the same time, followed him, and emerged — where?

Phildee didn't know. He could have performed the calculation necessary to the task almost instantly, but he was five. It was too much trouble.

He looked up, and saw a gray slope of rock vaulting above him. He looked down, and saw it fall away toward a plain on which were scattered pairs of foraging animals. He felt a warm breeze, smelled it saw it blow dust along the path, and saw Riya:

B is for big brown beast.

L is for looming large, looking lonely.

B? L? Bull? No — bison.

Bison:

bison (bi'sn) *n.* The buffalo of the N. Amer. plains.



Phildee shook his head and scowled. No — not bison, either. What, then? He probed.

Riya took a step forward. The sight of a living organism other than a person was completely unfamiliar to her. Nevertheless, anything that small, and undeniably covered — in most areas, at least — with some kind of fur, could not, logically, be anything but a strange kind of calf. But — she stopped, and raised her head — if a calf, then where was the calf?

Phildee's probe swept past the laboring mind directly into her telepathic, instinctual centers.

Voiceless, with their environment so favorable that it had never been necessary for them to develop prehensile limbs, female people had nevertheless evolved a method of child care commensurate with their comparatively higher intelligence.

Soft as tender fingers, gentle as the human hand that smooths the awry hair back from the young forehead, Riya's mental caress enfolded Phildee.

Phildee recoiled. The feeling was:

Warm	}	Not candy in the mouth
Soft		
Sweet		

Candy in the mouth	}	Familiar
		Good
		Tasty
		Nice

The feeling was	}	Not Familiar
		Not Good
		Not Tasty
		Not Nice

WHY?:

M is for many motionless months.

T is for tense temper tantrums.

R is for rabid — *NO!* — rapid rolling wrench.

MTR. Mother.

Phildee's mother wanted Phildee's father. Phildee's mother wanted green grass and apple trees, tight skirts and fur jackets on Fifth Avenue, men to turn and look, a little room where nobody could see her. Phildee's mother had radiation burns. Phildee's mother was dead.

He wavered; physically. Maintaining his position in this world was a process that demanded constant attention from the segment of his mind devoted to it. For a moment, even that small group of brain cells almost became involved in his reaction.

It was that which snapped him back into functioning logically. *MTR* was Mother. Mother was:

Tall	}	"In Heaven's name, Doctor, when will this thing be over?"
Thin		
White		
Biped		

BL was Riya. Riya was:

Big brown beast, looming large, looking lonely.

BL=MTR

Equation not meaningful, not valid.

ALMOST resolved, only a few traces of the initial conflict remained. Phildee put the tips of his right fingers to his mouth. He dug his toe into the ground, gouged a semicircular furrow, and smoothed it over with his sole.

Riya continued to look at him from where she was standing, two or three feet away. Haltingly, she reached out her mind again — hesitating not because of fear of another such reaction on Phildee's part, for that had been far beyond her capacity to understand, but because even the slightest rebuff on the part of a child to a gesture as instinctive as a Terrestrial mother's caress was something that none of the people had ever encountered before.

While her left-behind intellectual capacity still struggled to reconcile the feel of childhood with a visual image of complete unfamiliarity, the warm mind-caress went gently forth again.

Phildee made up his mind. Ordinarily, he was immune to the small emotional problems that beclouded less rational intellects. He was unused to functioning in other than a cause/effect universe. Mothers were usually — though sometimes not — matronly women who spent the greater part of roughly twenty years per child in conscious pre-occupation with, and/or subconscious or conscious rejection of, their offspring.

In his special case, Mother was a warm place, a frantic, hysteric voice, the pressure of the spasmodically contractile musculature linked to her hyperthyroid metabolism. Mother was a thing from before birth.

Riya — Riya bore a strong resemblance to an intelligent cow. In any physiological sense, she could no more be his mother than —

The second caress found him not unaccustomed to it. It enfolded his consciousness, tenderly, protectingly, empathetic.

Phildee gave way to instinct.

The fur along the ridge of Riya's spine prickled with a well-remembered happiness as she felt the hesitant answering surge in Phildee's mind. Moving surely forward, she nuzzled his face. Phildee grinned. He ran his fingers through the thick fur at the base of her short neck.

Big warm wall of brown fur.

Cool, happy nose.

Happy, happy, eyes.

Great joy welled up in Riya. No shameful trot across the mountains faced her now. No hesitant approach to the huddled, suspicious

wildlings was before her. The danger of sharp female hooves to be avoided, of skulking at the edge of the herd in hope of an anxious male, was a thing no longer to be half-fearfully approached.

With a nudge of her head, she directed Phildee down the path to the old range while she herself turned around. She stood motionless for a sweeping scan of the plain below her. The couples were scattered over the grass-but couples only, the females as yet unfulfilled.

This, too, was another joy to add to the greatest of all. So many things about her calf were incomprehensible — the only dimly-felt overtones of projected symbology that accompanied Phildee's emotional reactions, the alien structure — so many, many things. Her mind floundered vainly through the complex data.

But all that was nothing. What did it matter? The Time had been, and for another season, she was a dam.

PHILDEE walked beside her down the path, one fist wrapped in the fur of her flank, short legs windmilling.

They reached the plain, and Riya struck out across it toward the greatest concentration of people, her head proudly raised. She stopped once, and deliberately cropped a mouthful of grass with unconcern, but resumed her pace immediately thereafter.

With the same unconcern, she nudged Phildee into the center of the group of people, and, ignoring them, began teaching her calf to feed.

Eat. (Picture of Phildee/calf on all fours, cropping the plains grass.)

Phildee stared at her in puzzlement. Grass was not food. He sent the data emphatically.

Riya felt the tenuous discontent. She replied with tender understanding. Sometimes the calf was hesitant.

Eat. (Gently, understandingly, but firmly. [Repetition of picture.]) She bent her head and pushed him carefully over, then held his head down with a gentle pressure of her muzzle. *Eat.*

Phildee squirmed. He slipped out from under her nose and regained his feet. He looked at the other people, who were staring in puzzlement at Riya and himself.

He felt himself pushed forward again. *Eat.*

Abruptly, he realized the situation. In a culture of herbivores, what food could there be but herbiage? There would be milk, in time, but not for -- he probed -- months.

In probing, too, he found the visualization of his life with her ready at the surface of Riya's mind.

There was no shelter on the plain. His fur was all the shelter necessary.

But I don't have any fur.

In the fall, they would move to the southern range.

Walk? A thousand miles?

He would grow big and strong. In a year, he would be a sire himself.

His reaction was simple, and practiced. He adjusted his reality concept to Reimannian topology. Not actually, but subjectively, he felt himself beginning to slip Earthward.

Riya stiffened in alarm. The calf was straying. The knowledge was relayed from her mother-centers to the telepathic functions.

Stop. You cannot go there. You must be with your mother. You are not grown. Stop. Stay with me. I will protect you. I love you.

THE universe shuddered. Phildee adjusted frantically. Cutting through the delicately maintained reality concept was a scrambling, jamming frequency of thought. In terror, he flung himself backward into Riya's world. Standing completely still, he probed frantically into Riya's mind.

And found her mind only fumblingly beginning to intellectualize the simple formulation of what her instinctive centers had computed, systematized, and activated before her conscious mind had even begun to doubt that everything was well.

His mind accepted the data, and computed.

Handless and voiceless, not so fast afoot in their bulkiness as the weakest month-old calf, the people had long ago evolved the restraints necessary for rearing their children.

If the calf romped and ran, his mother ran beside him, and the calf was not permitted to run faster than she. If a calf strayed from its sleeping mother, it strayed only so far, and then the mother woke — but the calf had already long been held back by the time her intelligence awoke to the straying.

The knowledge and computations were fed in Phildee's rational centers. The Universe — and Earth — were closed to him. He must remain here.

But human children could not survive in this environment.

He had to find a solution — instantly.

He clinched his fists, feeling his arm muscles quiver.

His lower lip was pulled into his mouth, and his teeth sank in.

The diagram — the pattern — bigger — stronger — try — try — this is not real — *this* is real: brown earth, white clouds, blue sky — try — mouth full of warm salt . . .

F is for Phildee!

O is for Out!

R is for Riya!

T is for Topology!

H is for happiness and home!

Riya shook herself. She stood in the furrows of a plowed field, her eyes vacant with bewilderment. She stared uncomprehendingly at the walls and the radar tower, the concrete shoulders of the air raid bunkers. She saw antiaircraft quick-firers being hastily cranked around and down at her, heard Phildee's shout that saved her life, and understood none of it.

But none of it mattered. Her strange calf was with her, standing beside her with his fingers locked in her fur, and she could feel the warm response in his mind as she touched him with her caress again.

She saw the other little calves erupting out of the low dormitory buildings, and something within her crooned.

Riya nuzzled her foundling. She looked about her at the War Orphans' Relocation Farm with her happy, happy eyes.



The idea of sending a man back in time to re-do a job he's botched, so that a deadline can still be met—added to the thought of duplicating a man so there'll be two doing the same work at the same time—adds up to a production-manager's dream. But any dream can suddenly shift into a nightmare . . .

Nine Men In Time

by NOEL LOOMIS



THE receivers, two of them lawyers, had long faces when they sat down across from my desk in the office of the Imperial Printing Company.

"Frankly, Mr. Shane," said the older one, "it is a very grave question in our minds whether we should try to continue to operate the business

or whether we should close the plant and liquidate the machinery and equipment the best we can."

I was stunned. "I don't understand," I said helplessly. "We've been doing a nice business — and at a profit — in the year I've been here." It was my first big job, and I wanted to make good. I thought I *had* made good, but here they were jerking the floor out from under me, and I couldn't make any sense out of it.

"Well," said one, "the business isn't showing the profit we expected."

"What you need is a used-car lot," I said pointedly.

The elder man cleared his throat. "New look, Mr. Shane, suppose we say three months."

"What do you mean — three months?"

"We'll allow you to go ahead for three months. If the business doesn't show a distinct upturn by then —" He raised his eyebrows.

I swallowed hard. So that was it, then.

They even had the date set for the execution, and I knew they intended to go through with it. Only a revolution would change that.

I wanted that job; it was my chance to make a name for myself. If they should close the plant now, I'd have a black eye. You can't go around asking for a job and saying, "But I was making money for them." They'll wonder what else was wrong.

I thought I knew why they were so willing to close the plant; it was part of an estate, and the way things were, it took a lot of their time each month for not too big a fee. But if the estate should be liquidated — well, figure it out yourself. This business was all mixed up between an administratorship and a receivership, and the attorney's fees for liquidation would be a percentage of a hundred-thousand-dollar shop. It could run to a nice sum. They'd sell out, collect their fee, and forget it. A nice clean deal for them. And no more worry.

That is what I was up against, so perhaps it was inevitable that I should find Dr. Hudson — Lawrence Edward Hudson. That was 1983, really about the beginning of the scientific age in industry, and I dug this idea up out of the back of my head where it had been for some time. Dr. Hudson was the result. I did not label him efficiency-expert, for printers have always been notoriously allergic to that title. I called him production-engineer.

He was a small, thin-faced man with a face that seemed to all flow into a point where his nose should have been, and he started talking things over with me before he got his coat off.

"Printing," he said, "is really *the* backward industry. There has been

no basic advance since the invention of the linecasting machine around 1890, and possibly the development of offset printing."

"That," I said, "is why you are here — to bring out something startling."

"Well," he said, "you've heard the old one about the man who had something to do with each hand, and if you'd give him a broom he could sweep out the shop, too?" He leaned forward, his nose jutting at me, and said impressively, "Mr. Shane, we shall make that come literally true; we'll have men working in two places at once before we're through."

"Okay."

"In the meantime, there are certain old-fashioned fundamental principles on which we shall start. I shall be here at seven-thirty in the morning."

I should have known. Man, being mass, possesses inertia, mentally as well as physically, and therefore offers a certain amount of resistance to being kicked around. That applies to printers as well as to people. But at that time I was too worried. I gave Dr. Hudson full authority.

HE was there at seven-thirty the next morning, as he had said. At eight, the printers were standing around the time-clock, waiting for it to click the hour. It clicked, but the man nearest it was smoking a cigarette. He punched his card and then stood there, finishing the cigarette.

Dr. Hudson stepped up. "Gentlemen," he said, "it is now four minutes past eight. Starting-time is eight o'clock." He looked at his watch and compared it with the clock. "Please do your visiting and your smoking on your own time," he said coldly.

Well, it bothered me a little. I'd never handled them that way — and anyway, who cared about five minutes? The men would set just so much type, or do so much work. If they lost five minutes in one place, they generally made it up somewhere else. But this was Dr. Hudson's job.

It was nice that there had been no insolence — only a couple of raised eyebrows. Dr. Hudson's gesture had had its effect. They knew now who was boss.

For the next few days they kept their heads up. Production did not improve much, but I personally had not expected it to do that. I think Dr. Hudson had not expected it, either.

It was about three days after Dr. Hudson arrived, that a big job

came in from the Legal Publishing Company — a three-volume, four-thousand-page record for the U. S. circuit court. They could not handle the typesetting, so they farmed that part out to us.

It had to be delivered exactly one week before the deadline that had been set by the receivers for closing the plant. I very nearly turned it down, but Dr. Hudson's eyes glittered when he saw it. "Just what we need," he said.

"That's almost two thousand galleys of type," I reminded him, "besides our regular stuff." I was very dubious.

But Dr. Hudson was enthusiastic. "We'll make history," he promised.

Well, we did. Union or not, the men would have to learn to do things the modern way. That is what I told the chairman when he protested against having the men go back in time to set a job over. That had been my first idea, executed by Dr. Hudson.

As I said, Dr. Hudson was an experimental physicist. He was, you might say, a super-physicist, because he had specialized in finding ways to do all the things which traditionally were impossible, like traveling in time.

So when the Monotype casterman set a job in Caslon that should have been set in Century, I turned him over to Dr. Hudson. The doctor took him into the laboratory and sent him back two days in time and had him do the job over — but right. The casterman didn't like it, but he didn't know what to do about it.

There was plenty of buzzing that afternoon among the men, especially when the job, re-set in the correct face — or rather, set in the correct face, because this now was the first time it had been set — was put on the dump. I gave the boys five minutes to crowd around and look at the proof and then I broke it up. I was exultant. It didn't occur to me then that a man could be too ambitious.

That afternoon the chairman came in, and I was ready for him. "We are not," I pointed out, "violating our union contract."

"But you made the casterman set the job twice, and he doesn't get paid for it."

"We pay the casterman two dollars an hour for seven hours a day. When he's here more than seven hours, he'll get time and a half," I said triumphantly.

The chairman frowned, but I didn't relax; I was on top and I knew it. "He set the job wrong in the first place," I pointed out, "and he got paid for that. Is there any reason why he shouldn't correct his own mistake, if it doesn't take any of his time?"

"It does take time," he insisted.

"No. He's only re-living that four hours and doing the job right instead of wrong; you can't find any fault with that."

And he couldn't. I felt wonderful. I wanted to jump and shout, but I compromised by taking Dr. Hudson down for a gleeful drink and planning our next tactic.

We also settled a point of strategy. We decided to confuse them with a few minor things before springing our next real item — which would be, to put it mildly, revolutionary.

Things looked pretty good. The only thing that bothered me was that we hadn't started the big job yet.

THE next morning I saw a new face at the keyboard of one of our linecasting machines. I had long ago adopted democracy as a good policy, so now I stopped to introduce myself. "I'm J. J. Shane, the manager."

His hands, with incredibly long fingers, had been just flowing over the keyboard — that is the only way to describe it — with the long fingers moving down an inch or so whenever they were above the right key, and doing it all so smoothly it was hard to realize he was actually composing lines. His hands seemed to flow back and forth like the tide, and yet he was setting twenty ems eight-point and keeping the machine hung. Here, I thought right away, was a valuable man. This fellow could be a pace-setter if we would handle him right.

But when I spoke to him and held out my hand, he looked at me for a second without missing a stroke, then his hands dropped away from the keyboard and he started to unfold himself from the chair.

"You don't need to get up," I said hastily. "I don't want to take up any of your time."

But he finished unfolding himself and stood up. "I have plenty of time," he said. He was over seven feet tall, and that meant a foot and a half over me — and very thin. His clothes looked pretty weatherbeaten, as if maybe he'd been caught in a few rainstorms.

"Jones," said his booming voice from somewhere far above me. "High-Pockets Jones, sometimes known as the Dean of Barn-stormers."

I leaned back to look up at him. His face was as weatherbeaten as his clothes. I recognized the reddish tan that comes from facing a hot wind on the top of a moving boxcar. He was obviously a bum, and probably wouldn't be with us long, but there was something almost of nobility in his eyes — calmness, gentleness, or perhaps just the

knowledge of having been in many, many situations and the experience gained from getting out of them, and the self-assurance that he would always be able to get out of any situation.

I reached up to shake hands. "Yes, I've heard of you," I said. "You're sort of a throwback to the days when they needed barnstormers to correct bad working-conditions, aren't you?"

He chose to pass that remark. "I've heard of you, too," he said, that last-word sounding like the low string on a bull fiddle.

I laughed quickly but efficiently — shortly, I believe they call it. "Nothing good, I hope."

High-Pockets Jones paused a moment before he answered: "Not bad, until lately."

It took me a moment or two to realize what he had said. I bent back to look at his face. He was quite sober about it.

"Okay," I said hastily. "I don't want to keep you from your work."

I worried a little about High-Pockets. I had heard a lot about him; he was a sort of mystery man in the printing business, going from place to place, wherever printers felt they were having trouble, and trying to straighten things out.

The stories about him indicated that he had some odd ways of doing that, based largely on a sort of legendary influence that he had over machinery. I remembered even the theory that all machinery was negatively charged with some sort of "personal" electricity, and that High-Pockets — having been hit by lightning — had a terrifically high charge of positive electricity of the same sort, which enabled him to do miraculous things on occasion with machinery — especially linecasting machines.

Well, I dismissed that as a bunch of talk, but what I didn't quite like was the fact that High-Pockets traditionally appeared in places where he was needed to straighten out things for the men.

I WENT into conference with Dr. Hudson, and he agreed with me that we should go right ahead; but we'd keep an eye on High-Pockets Jones, and at the first sign of interference Mr. Jones would find himself in a great deal of trouble. I would even, I decided, stoop to having him thrown in jail on a phony charge, if that should be necessary.

By this time we had started on the Legal Printing Company job, and we went ahead with our next offensive. Mind-reading came first. Dr. Hudson installed a black box at the water-fountain, and he explained to the men what it was for. He had a private wire to his desk, and a

transformer that turned the current from the box back into thoughts. It was quite efficient. Some of the thoughts we got the first day were vituperative, some were quite obscene, and some were pretty feeble, but that didn't matter. It got the boys to worrying, and it saved us a bottle of spring water a day.

Then there was the installation of the lucite piping. Of course seeing in curves had been possible for years, but never on this scale. We piped lucite to every place where a man worked, and so we could throw a switch in the inner office and check on every man in the shop without their knowing it. That was a very clever device; it really put the men on the spot.

Once in a while, when I needed to relax, I would flip a switch and throw High-Pockets Jones' machine on the screen. The smooth rhythm of those flowing hands was more soothing than a lullaby, especially because I knew how much type they were getting up.

Then we advanced to the third step in our strategy: having a man in two places at once.

Dr. Hudson finished making his cabinet filled with coils and transformers and condensers and circuits I'd never heard of, and we set it up in the composing-room one night.

It was that night that full realization hit me that we had set only two hundred galleys of type out of the two thousand on the Legal Printing Company job, and that there were only two weeks left to get it out. Somehow or other, I had let it slip by. I thought Dr. Hudson was watching those things; I had been busy trying to make an impression for the receivers.

I was sick when I figured it all out. We had six machines. If we should run those six machines two shifts a day, our capacity was about three hundred and sixty galleys a week. Into eighteen hundred that goes considerably more than two times. We would need five weeks of full production — and we couldn't possibly give it full production; we had other jobs, too.

The only hope was Dr. Hudson's new machine.

The next day the electricians hooked it up to a twelve-hundred-volt feed-line, and by noon it was ready to go. At twelve-thirty, as soon as the men punched in, I called them together. This was on office time, of course, so there couldn't be any squawk. Dr. Hudson was there to explain. I never had fully realized how much of him was nose before I watched him that day.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this is nothing to be afraid of. This is merely

a modern device to assure continuous production in the composing-room by eliminating lost time from sickness and accidents. As you know, if a linotype operator is ill, his machine goes untouched. That day's production is lost. At a cost per man of around ten dollars an hour, that represents a considerable loss."

He opened the cabinet and showed them a comfortable leather seat inside.

"There are two compartments in this cabinet," he said. "All this machine does is to produce, temporarily, an extra man to fill the sick man's place. One of the men present steps in here; I close the door, see that the machine is charged here on the other side with plenty of linotype metal to provide the material of atomic synthesis, press the button, and lo! — the man in the chair is duplicated on the other side of the cabinet."

High-Pockets Jones stepped forward with his deep eyes fixed on Dr. Hudson. "What," High-Pockets asked, "is your theory of this machine?"

Dr. Hudson smiled. "I am glad you asked that, Mr. Jones. Very glad. This process is in no sense a separation or thinning out of the man in the chair. It is, in reality, an unusual extension of the well-known fact that nature tends to follow a pattern. If you want to make a synthetic sapphire, you start with a seed sapphire, and the artificial process builds up on that. Now, this machine, which I call an extender, is merely a far-reaching extension of the synthesis of precious stones."

"By use of a revolutionary type of three-dimensional scanner, which was invented by myself," he said modestly, "I am able to focus on a certain object from a certain distance and, if there is material at hand, synthesize an exact duplicate of the original from the scanner. It doesn't hurt the original in any way. You merely have two where you had but one."

The men stood around bug-eyed and stared incredulously — all but High-Pockets. "Is the second one alive?" he asked. "I mean, would you say it has a soul?"

"That," said Dr. Hudson crisply, "is out of my field. I suggest you consult your spiritual adviser."

The chairman stepped up. "You have tried this thing, have you?"

"Thoroughly tested," said Dr. Hudson.

I refrained from smiling. The printers were flabbergasted; they didn't know what to do or think. The chairman was trying to get his poor

fogged brain together with arguments. The only person besides myself and Dr. Hudson who seemed to be at ease was the barnstormer, High-Pockets Jones.

"In other words," High-Pockets said, "if we are short an operator, I can walk in that cabinet and you can in a few minutes make another High-Pockets Jones, who will set type until you put him back into the cabinet and turn him back into a hundred and sixty pounds of linotype metal?"

"Precisely," Dr. Hudson smiled and showed his teeth. I could see he was losing his patience.

"Well," said High-Pockets, "I can see about nine hundred legal questions right off the bat. Who is going to draw the duplicate's pay? Is the duplicate entitled to a union card? Is he entitled to overtime? Is he a man or an automaton?"

"Sorry," said Dr. Hudson. "I am not a legal expert."

HIGH-POCKETS walked up to the cabinet and looked inside. I'd swear he looked as if he knew what all those wires were there for. His deep eyes took it all in, and then he announced in his booming voice from far above us. "You're waiting for a volunteer," he said. "I'll be first."

I practically fell over. I think even Dr. Hudson was dumbfounded; we had not expected unconditional surrender. I was elated.

High-Pockets Jones was seated in the cabinet. Dr. Hudson threw the switch. After five minutes' humming, a relay clicked. Dr. Hudson opened the door. High-Pockets Jones, with a deep smile on his weather-beaten face, unfolded his long legs and stepped out, holding his head down to keep from hitting the top of the door-frame.

"How do you feel?" asked Dr. Hudson.

"Excellent," boomed High-Pockets, straightening up.

The physicist went around to the other side, and though I had been watching these experiments for some time, I give you my word I very nearly choked on my own tongue when I saw High-Pockets Jones walk out of the second compartment.

The second High-Pockets produced a worn bill-fold and extracted a pink union permit.

"I protest this inhuman manipulation of a man's individuality," said the chairman indignantly; "this is outrageous."

"I felt better now. I'd been waiting for that. 'Let him go to work,' I said. 'We need an operator today, anyway; Bill Smith has the flu.

I will guarantee to pay a man's wages to whomever you say, if this is found to be illegal."

Under the law, there wasn't much they could do. And I had already taken the precaution of retaining the best legal counsel in the city.

I was elated when they went to work. I pumped Dr. Hudson's hand and assured him that we had indeed made spectacular history, and together we could make millions.

The first trouble came an hour later. One of the High-Pocketses — I couldn't tell which one — came into the office. "The foreman sent me up to get some work," he said in his booming voice.

I frowned. What was going on back there? I went back, High-Pockets Jones was working on his own machine. High-Pockets Jones was also working on Bill Smith's machine. I looked up quickly. High-Pockets Jones was also standing beside me.

He smiled. "Catching, isn't it?"

I swallowed, but I knew they were playing tricks. High-Pockets Jones had walked into the cabinet a second time, and his double had worked the controls and produced a third. Well, this could get confusing, but I stayed calm. "You're a floor-man, too, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay. You go back to the Monotype room and get a bunch of slugs and leads and saw them up to fill the cases. They're getting pretty low."

"Yes, sir." He turned and went away.

When I got back to the office I thought I'd just turn on the lights and see what they might be up to next. I had an uneasy feeling.

Sure enough, a High-Pockets Jones was stepping out of the second compartment of the cabinet. I gulped and quickly checked the others. This was the fourth one.

I went back to raise hell, but High-Pockets — well, one of them — was quite calm about it. "Two men can do it faster than one," he said.

I licked my lips and beat my brains, but I didn't know the answer. I went back to think it over. I had just decided to laugh it off when three High-Pockets Joneses came into the office.

"We need something to do," they said, all in that great booming voice that seemed to come from the ceiling.

"See the foreman. Tell him to give you all the standing type that needs to be distributed."

They left. I breathed a sigh of relief and sent out for a padlock to put on the cabinet.

AN HOUR later, with a nice, shiny new padlock, I went back to the composing-room. But I very nearly fainted when I saw the activity going on back there. The composing-room was filled with High-Pockets Joneses.

Two still were at the linecasting machines, and a whole crew of others were running around the floor.

"Where's the foreman?" I barked.

High-Pockets Jones — one of them — came to attention. "He went home. He was quite discouraged; he told us to throw in all the standing type we could find."

It didn't look good. I had the feeling that High-Pockets was laughing at me — this High-Pockets, anyway.

That reminded me. I gathered up all the High-Pocketsets in the composing-room and lined them up. There were nine — exactly nine — every one of them over seven feet tall and thin as a sidestick, every one of them with a gentle, booming voice.

I wanted to tell the original High-Pockets to gather them all up and put them back together, but I didn't know how to find the original.

Well, they couldn't get me down. I fooled them. I told them all to take the rest of the day off — at full pay.

All nine of them washed up together and left together. It was the damndest thing I ever saw offstage. Nine identical High-Pocketsets — all so tall they had to weave around the neon lights instead of ducking under them. It was enough to give a man nightmares, to watch that line of High-Pockets Joneses advancing across an open composing-room.

This kind of thing went on the next day, and the next. Every day there were nine High-Pockets Joneses in the composing-room. Everybody was falling over everybody else, when they weren't standing around laughing up their sleeves.

There was nothing I could do. I had been forced to turn over all of my house to eight of the High-Pocketsets, because they had to have a place to stay, and after all, I was responsible for them.

Our production went up a little, but the Legal Printing Company job was hardly touched. There was too much of that sort of festive spirit in the air; everybody was watching the High-Pocketsets and waiting to see what would happen next — and hoping for something extravagant. In other words, they refused to take it seriously; to them, it was a circus.

I didn't have the nerve to ask anybody else to split. After all, High-Pockets was in nine places at once; that should have been enough. It

was apparent by that time that the extender would never be anything in a printing office but a psychological monstrosity.

I had to admit I was stymied, and I got so I didn't give a whoop. I was sunk anyway. That is the way it went that week. On Saturday night Dr. Hudson and I got beautifully soused.

ON MONDAY morning I didn't care. The Legal Printing Company called up and said they could give us a few more days; if they could have it by Friday, they could still make the filing date. I said we'd do everything possible, and then I hung up and laughed bitterly and aloud. We couldn't get it out if we had another month. The only thing was, as soon as our plant closed up, they could ask the court for an extension because of unforeseen circumstances, and probably get it. So I laughed aloud.

I saw Dr. Hudson cleaning out his desk, and I nodded. "Sorry, Doc, we got all fouled up. Maybe some other time —"

He nodded. "Progress always encounters opposition," he said. "It just happens that we are the sacrifices in this deal."

"Yeah." I went out and had a drink.

I was pretty dazed that week. It didn't make any difference. I had already tried everything possible, and they had me hog-tied. And those nine High-Pocketsets had made me a laughing-stock.

On Friday morning, I looked at the calendar and it suddenly occurred to me that this was the thirty-first and the receivers would be around this afternoon to decide whether or not to close the place.

There wasn't any doubt as to what they would do. I began to clean out my own desk. I felt terrible.

Then one of the High-Pocketsets came in with a piece of copy in his hand. He looked at me queerly and then said softly, "You leaving?"

"Yes," I said bitterly, "I'm going. You got me licked; I'm through."

"I was just trying to point out to you the absurdity of some of your new devices," he said.

"Okay," I said, "you win. Guys like you make a business of going around the country breaking print-shops and printing-office managers."

High-Pockets' booming voice came from the ceiling. "You are mistaken. I did not try to break you."

"Well, you broke me, anyway." I blurted out the whole thing to him, how the receivers were about to close us up, how the Legal Printing Company job was weeks behind and was supposed to be delivered today. Then I apologized. "It isn't your fault," I told him. "I'm sorry. I

didn't mean that. I just — well, I wanted to make good on this job."

High-Pockets was very thoughtful. "I feel kind of sorry for you," he said.

"Oh, you don't need to. I earned it; I've got it coming. I was just a little too ambitious, that's all. I didn't know a man could be too ambitious."

High-Pockets looked at me. His deep eyes were thoughtful. I could almost see the neurons buzzing around in his head.

"If I could get this job out for you on time, would that save the day?"

"Probably." I laughed — or tried to. "But it is now a physical impossibility. There isn't enough time."

High-Pockets said sharply, "Call a truck," and wheeled out of the office.

I called the delivery truck before I realized what I had done. Well, it didn't make any difference. They could start hauling out the machinery.

I finished cleaning out my desk and took a wastebasket full of papers to the back shop.

And there, I give you my word, three High-Pocketses were busy carrying galleys from the type-dump to the proof-press. And as fast as they could carry a galley of type from the dump, another galley would just materialize there. I stood and stared. Galleys of type were coming out of thin air at the rate of about four galleys a minute.

I went over to where High-Pockets — the original High-Pockets, I suppose — was sitting at his machine. "Would you please tell me what is going on?" I asked.

"Well," said High-Pockets, "it isn't so complicated. I just sent the other five back in time to set this job, that's all. They've gone back about twelve weeks; and of course there isn't much time, so I had to make them double up. I've got them split up into shifts, along with a double of the chairman there, to cover the six machines. It's a little hard to explain, whether they are split up in time, or the time-split ones are split up in place, or just what."

"It's insane," I said weakly.

"Well, at any rate, you see you have the equivalent of twelve night shifts running at once, plus twelve graveyard shifts. That's twenty-four times six — you have six machines — times twelve — that's the number of galleys a day for each machine. I think it comes out to seventeen hundred for a day's work."

I GRABBED hold of the vise-locking screw to keep my knees from doubling under me. It was incredible — and yet it was true.

High-Pockets also had organized the proofreaders and copyholders, and they were reading in the past also, and sending us proofs in the present. If anybody ever tells you they can't get seventeen hundred galleys of type a day out of six linécasting machines — well, they just don't know High-Pockets Jones.

"Of course," he said apologetically, "they'll want to be paid."

I was practically hysterical by that time. "I'll see that they get over-time for every hour they put in."

High-Pockets looked at me with his deep eyes. "Me, too," he said.

I laughed when I thought how there were nine of him working in twelve places at once — or was it twenty-four — or maybe forty-eight. I was too dizzy by that time to figure out anything. I only knew the job was going to be delivered. The truckers were going in a steady stream through the back door.

Maybe the receivers would close up the place; maybe they wouldn't. At least the job was being delivered.

About four-thirty, the galleys suddenly quit coming; the job was finished. Half an hour later it was out of the shop, and I had entered it on the books.

I had hardly laid down the pen when the three receivers came in. They smoked a little and talked and I held my breath while they looked at the books. I couldn't figure out what they were going to do.

One of them whistled when he saw the Legal Printing Company figures. "Well," he said, "business *has* been good."

"Fair," I said modestly.

The door to the shop opened and High-Pockets Jones walked in. I gulped; eight High-Pockets Joneses walked in behind him.

The three receivers stared. Their eyes stuck out until it was ludicrous. But it wasn't funny; I knew something was going to happen now.

By the time the last High-Pockets got in, the first receiver had seen what was going on and was trying to get out, but nine High-Pocketsees in one room are a lot. For a minute it looked like a basketball game.

The elder lawyer looked at me suspiciously. "Please explain this." I was too weak. "See for yourself," I said.

One High-Pockets spoke to me. "Sorry, Mr. Shane. Just came in to say good-bye. Never realized —"

"That's okay," I said. "You've done your part; I can't squawk."

The attorney spoke up. "Mr. Shane," he said, "I think the affairs of

the Imperial Printing Company are in perilous circumstances. I do not know what is the meaning of this, but certainly there is something here without precedent." And if you know lawyers, you know that anything without precedent is very unholy.

I told what we had done, but he was interested in only one thing. "Think what a combined suit by these nine-er-twins here would do."

"Nontuplets," suggested one High-Pockets.

"Why" — the lawyer seemed to be overwhelmed by the enormity of the damages he was visualizing — "that could amount to millions."

I was desperate for an idea, but it wasn't any use. They were taking it out of my hands. I saw the righteous light in the eyes of those men, and I knew it was all over.

But High-Pockets — or one of him — spoke up. "Is it your intention," he asked me, "to keep the time-machine and the extender?"

"No," I said. "I rather thought I'd get rid of the whole business; it's much too complicated. Anyway, you boys out there came through with superhuman efforts this afternoon. I don't think I'd ask you to be in two places at once again."

High-Pockets turned to the lawyer. "If the receivers agree to let the plant operate as long as it shows a profit," he said, "we'll all go back together and then you can break up the extender and there won't be any more trouble. If you don't agree to that" — he paused — "we'll stay in nine bodies and sue you every time we get a chance."

The lawyer winced. The receivers went into conference. Finally they said, a little anxiously, "If the Messieurs High-Pockets will be good enough to go back together, and if Mr. Shane will destroy the machine, we are agreeable to the plant's continuance as a printing office."

"Hooray!" I said, and nine High-Pocketses yelled hooray.

I was exultant. I shook hands with each one of the High-Pocketses as they filed into the extender. When there was only one left, he shook hands with me.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing at all," said High-Pockets Jones. "Just got a call this morning from a print-shop where they're trying to make the men wear roller-skates so they can move faster. Guess they need me down there. So long, boss."

"So long," I said. I was sorry to see him go. I locked up the shop — but first I cut off all the power and got a pig and smashed up Dr. Hudson's coils and transformers. I wanted to come down in the morning without seeing double.

We all have to die sometime, but it's more the manner of our going, and the reason why we must die when we do that's the rub.

By Earthlight

by BRYCE WALTON



THE rocket skin was like a dun-colored wall in the dim light under the hull. Three anonymous men who were beyond suspicion, who had worked on the rocket, were taking Barlow up in the elevator, up along the rocket's curving walls.

Earlier, scores of men had climbed up many ladders to various platforms where doors opened into the rocket's compartments for the insertion and repair of the many highly-specialized instruments.

It was still — so damn still here!

Some guards were way down below somewhere in the shadows, but they didn't notice anything. The three men were regular workers and there were last minute things to be done. It all looked quite logical.

Over in the blockhouse, some of America's most important political and military figures were sitting over instruments and charts, waiting, discussing.

One of the three men was talking, explaining things to Barlow about the rocket, about the pressure-suit he was to wear. Barlow listened and got it all straight. Barlow was helped into the suit. It weighed 700 pounds, and after they had encased him in it — all but the huge helmet-

plate — he lay there absolutely helpless, on a dolly, waiting to be rolled into the rocket's compartment.

The anonymous faces he'd never seen before, and would never see again, looked down at him. He blinked several times and moistened his lips. The suit was like a lead coffin. He didn't feel dead, but supposedly dead and unable to tell any one. A ridiculous way to feel!

What was the matter with him? He'd expected to die, all the time, from the start. Everybody died! Few could experience what he was experiencing. Death was worth this. One last kick, the biggest kick of all for Hal Barlow. You lived for kicks, so what was the matter?

He couldn't move his limbs; he could barely lift his head. Encased in 700 pounds of suit. Helpless. A pencil-flash flickered on and off. A couple of eyes shone. A whisper. "The kit is fastened to your belt. The instructions are in an air-tight capsule inside the kit. If you're caught, and the paper's removed, it will disintegrate; now we'll slide you inside."

The helmet slid over his face. It was absolutely dark. The suit, all-enclosing mobile shelter, atmosphere-pressure, temperature-control, mobility and electric power to manipulate tools. It's own power plant. It reprocessed continuously the precious air breathed by the occupant, putting it back into circulating supply after enriching it. The rocket was cold and alien and it would support no life; the suit alone protected him. The rocket was just metal and gadgets; only the suit stood between him and an agonizing death from acceleration, deceleration, extremes of heat and cold.

The dolly was rolling him in through the small opening. His encased body being slid, stuffed, jammed into something like a wad of ammo into a barrel. His body was entirely constricted. He couldn't hear anything. It was black. He could shift his massive helmet slightly. It clanged against metal, and the sound inside the helmet was like rusty thunder.

His blood boiled softly. He felt like a child shut up in the dark. He thought of the radio in the suit, and desperately manipulated the controls by the small control-panel in the metal hand of the suit.

The voices seemed to quiet whatever had been boiling up in him. He had started to scream; he remembered that now. Somehow, with an intense effort, he had suppressed the scream, clamped his teeth on it. Now the voices helped. He realized how much time had passed in the quick pressured dark. Voices preparing to send the first rocket to the moon. Quiet voices with all the suspense and tension held down by long military habit.

He had started being afraid. More than that. He had been going to scream. He — Hal Barlow! Where was the excitement, the great thrill, the big kick he had anticipated, to compensate for a voluntary dying?

He felt only anxiety. Afraid the terror would return. He had never admitted fear before. He thought back a little, trying to recall something that would explain the fear.

"X minus one!"

He felt as if an immense cyst of suppuration had burst inside of him. Sweat teared his eyes.

If they had psyched me, I'd know. I wouldn't be afraid. What would they have found? Why am I afraid now when I've never been afraid in my life?

Or had he? He couldn't remember. He tried to think of something immediate . . .

TWO HOURS before, Barlow had paused on the second floor of the men's barracks on the White Sands, New Mexico, Proving Grounds and looked out. He shivered a little. It was a lonely spot, maybe the loneliest in the world. Especially at night. Even here, Barlow managed to be with someone most of the time — but the same dullards got boring. Even women (like Lorraine), who said they loved him, were futile companions; a guy whose future was death couldn't get emotionally involved.

He went into his three-room dump and switched on the radio at once. He needed the sound of voices and the music. He started to undress in the dark. But the cold and frigid moonlight came in and shone on the bed; it revealed the body lying there. The face looking up at Barlow was his own! His breath thinned. His hands were wet.

It did him a lot more justice than any mirror, or the reflection in a woman's eyes. The half-boyish, half-man face with the thin wiry lips, the blond curling hair and the sun-burned, cynical face. The blue eyes that seemed never quite able to smile. The face on the bed never would; it was dead.

Barlow turned. Part of the shadow in the corner moved. A voice. "D-716."

The 16 meant that this was that number among the hundred possible goals of duty and sacrifice. The D of course meant Death, and Barlow had known since having been given the number years ago what his end would be.

There were many other ways, some worse than dying. Loss of identity

by plastic surgery. Barlow's appearance had been thoroughly altered three times. Some had volunteered for the torture and concentration camps of the East. Barlow had done that, too; anything for kicks.

He'd never bothered to indoctrinate himself with the philosophy of the Brotherhood with its seven rituals of self-denial and discipline, its long program of learning the love of humanity, the unity of each with all people and with the Universe.

He had his own philosophy. You were born, and then you died; the rest was just a living job.

You lived as an individual, and not as a cog — if you had the guts for it. You lived for the excitement and the thrill of danger and the maintenance of individuality — if you could. Otherwise you might as well die when you were born — because then the stretch between wasn't worth the price.

That was Barlow's way. Only the *manner* of dying was important. Everybody had to die. All that the Brotherhood really worked for was the goal of enabling everybody to live as long as possible, and finally to die with dignity and moral integrity. Barlow didn't need their philosophy; basically, that was all he, too, really wanted — maybe.

The man was indistinct in the shadows. An anonymous figure without a name. "The man on the bed has made the supreme sacrifice for the cause."

"So he's dead," Barlow said casually. "So what?"

"It took a lot of work to make such an exact resemblance. One of our members brought him in through the guards in a supply truck. It's easy to bring in a dead man who'll never go back out — except as someone who was already in. You of course."

"No one will know what is to happen to the real me then?"

"No one. It will be assumed that you committed suicide."

Barlow grinned thinly.

"There's been no change in your attitude? Your willingness to —"

"Die? None. Willing Barlow, always ready to drop dead at a moment's notice."

"You're the only one of the Brotherhood who's never submitted to the rituals and the psyching; we hope that isn't bad. Your service has been excellent. But I wish you had submitted to a psyching before this assignment, because there's one basic weakness, an Achilles Heel, in everyone, and on an assignment so vital as this, it would be worth knowing, in advance . . ."

"Get someone else if you're worried."

"You're the only member we have, who's inside the grounds here, who can stand the acceleration and deceleration."

"Ah," Barlow exclaimed. "This sounds big."

"It couldn't be bigger," the anonymous man said. "Than a one-way trip to the moon!"

THE MAN explained some things to Barlow. Barlow didn't say anything. Maybe there was a slight tremor in his lips, but he didn't think so.

The first man into space. The first man to the Moon!

"... a world atomic war may break within six months. In spite of propaganda being fed to the people, trying to paint this atomic war as just another war, we know it will probably be the last war, the end of civilization. So our philosophical revolution, the revolution of men's minds, will begin in approximately six months from tonight. But if this last war breaks, our centuries-old plan will fail; it will never even materialize.

"The revolution is quite delicate. Simultaneously, all over the world, at a specific time, and under rigidly-controlled and favorable circumstances, the movement we have been building so long will spring up. Nothing can stop it then, once the spiritual fires begin to burn! But it can't begin until the exact scheduled moment. Your job will be to attempt to prolong this present 'peace' until our plan can go into effect. That's why you're making this trip to the moon."

Barlow laughed. "That doesn't mean a damn thing to me. To me, the only important thing is that I'm the first man into space. That's enough for anyone to know."

"Is it?"

"I'm just Hal Barlow, a guy who's had several other names, and who's really only a number! I joined the Brotherhood for kicks, not lectures! I'll do this job, in my own way, because I want to do it. For Hal Barlow!"

The man in the shadows nodded slowly. "Can't you feel what it means? Our spiritual revolution? You've read some of the works we've printed on it. This feeling of oneness with humanity. That's the real value. Can't you —"

Barlow said. "Isn't the offer of my life enough?"

The shadow said. "Maybe — for us, for people. But what about you? Maybe there are some things even you can't face alone. And think of those people out there; they need and cling to each other, even to each

others' madness. Living in futile hope while going on down the crazy toboggan-ride to their own destruction. The living loudly and in public, because to be silent allows reality to enter in on feet of terror; and because 'to be alone' means madness. The simulated gaiety of the bars every night, with the shadows outside that never seem to go away, even under the glare of neon. They've never had a chance to plan, to live with any hope for the future. Burdened down by anxiety, they've built up a defense of falseness, and underneath, the terrible fear of the atomic bomb is a constant inner sickness!"

Barlow grinned. "A nice speech, but I already know those things. What I'm really interested in is what I'm supposed to do."

So the man explained to Barlow some things about why he was going on a one-way trip to the moon in a rocket intended for no man to be in, in a rocket intended for no living thing.

After the man had gone, Barlow quickly snapped on the radio again, and he felt better with the music and human voices. For a moment there, he had seemed to feel a tinge of fear. What the devil? Psych-screening? So he was capable of fear; who wasn't? He didn't need psyching. What indignity to the individual — to have the fingerprints of psychiatrists all over your brain!

I'm Hal Barlow! The first man into space. The first man to the Moon!

He had gotten to the rocket-launching site early and had sat in the moonlight smoking a cigarette. He felt odd inside and he didn't know why. The moon had a cold effect on him. He was worried, about himself.

The whole area had been painted and disguised with all the arts of camouflage; everything appearing from the air looked like sand and sage and rock and hill. The rocket itself was built inside the hill, which served as a giant launching-barrel to guide the rocket with the exact accuracy demanded in its take-off.

The moon had loomed large and still and cold.

"... ten, nine, eight ..."

So he was back inside the suit, inside the rocket, jammed into a barrel like a wad of ammo. Now he was beginning to see what might cause his terror. His Achilles Heel. But it was too late. What would they have found if they'd psych'd him?

A wild kid — old, but still driven by the urges of a kid who hadn't grown up. A lot of surface things, the inside of him covered over. Obsessed with exterior things, he had never given himself a chance to see inside himself. Afraid. Always been with people, beer, women, bars, juke-boxes, noises, excitement. Never alone —

No parents that he could remember. He'd run away from the middle-west orphanage and heard about the Brotherhood from a friendly priest and the priest had taken him into the organization. Strictly for kicks though, Barlow had warned. The priest had smiled with wisdom — "You don't know your own true motives, my boy."

"... seven, six, five, four ..."

JUST HAL BARLOW. That was all right, but the real Hal Barlow was unknown. He'd never realized, with all his screaming about individualism, how much he'd depended on people. He had loved no one. He had seemed to love them when he was with them, but could never form any solid associations. Now all the people he had never really known became as shadows thrown upon the wall of his brain. He felt the sweat soaking his skin. Alone. Destined for it like a twin, whose double has died at birth. Always — in league with those on the other side of the looking-glass.

"... three ... two ..."

He screamed; *no, I can't do it, I can't face it —*

Someone — listen —

The dull muted explosion miles away, and the terrific compression and the wash of numbing, deafening sound beating back around him. Everything inside him seeming to whirl up and come down in a crash. The seeming to slide around in the dihedrals of time and space, slipping in and out of being like a ball-bearing in a maze ...

First man to the moon. In a rocket meant for no man. Not a rocket. A coffin — on a one-way trip —

And I — maybe the one, the very one they should never have sent.

With each degree of returning consciousness, more and more capacity for fighting the fear. He cursed the fear and wrestled with it like a man with an invisible opponent down an endless flight of stairs.

He felt too alone, isolated; then he thought of the readings. They could be flashed into a small screen in the face-plate by manipulating the fingers of his right hand. He tried to concentrate on the readings as an aid in fighting the fear.

... in the stratosphere, eighty kilometers, racket's temperature minus a hundred and fifty degrees. Hundred and twenty-five kilometers, lower part of ionosphere, up plus one hundred and fifty — and then on up where it was somewhere around a thousand degrees, and who cared? He was beyond that — away way out — somewhere —

It went on a long time and then . . . nothing but darkness . . . the lonely song of the gyroscopes. His own voice . . . distant, alien . . . raving . . . a kind of delirium . . . then sometime, an awareness of the cutting down of power, the brief warning of intuition, the concussion. And as consciousness came back again, the knowing that he had hit too hard in spite of the lighter moon gravity.

His head throbbing crazily and around him the absolute darkness and silence and the warm ache in his head, the dizziness and the warm stickiness flowing down his face.

He lay there, afraid of retching. He moved his finger to release more oxygen. He could smell himself, the sharp bite of fear and the odor of blood.

He felt panic. He experimented. He could move easily here where the seven-hundred pound suit weighed only 140 pounds. He switched on the suit's light beam. The anonymous man had said. *"Get out of the rocket at once, silently!"*

He squeezed out of the barrel, into the larger compartment. He got the compartment door open. Half blind by shock, he was out in the Lunar night. *"When you get outside, stop right there. Read the instructions!"*

He had a panicky desire to fall to his knees, cling to the rocket. He stood there stiffly. "It isn't fair," he whispered over and over. "I can't do it!"

Read the instructions.

ALONE, a man — one man — on the moon. No movement, no sound, no air, no life. Only sharp black and white contrast of lifeless shadow to accentuate the awful and final loneliness. Occasional meteors striking into the pumice dust — silently, voicing the stillness of his own terror.

He read the instructions. He hooked the capsule out of the kit, opened it. The suit's single light beaming like a Cyclopean eye.

The giant walls of Albategnius the center of the moon's visible disk towered bleakly up around . . . everywhere . . . lifelessness, just broken rock . . . no water to erode. No voices, no faces, no life anywhere. Just Barlow. Barlow and a rocket.

And the stars and somewhere, the earth in the sky, sharp as molten steel in the eyes. The rocket watched him and listened. This was a target rocket. 240,000 miles away in the New Mexico blockhouse, they were watching through the rocket's eyes, feeling through the rocket's

mechanical nervous system. The rocket carried instruments to test out flight calculations, controls, conditions on the moon. It carried self-operating information about the range of temperatures, radiation, gravitational influences and other conditions to be encountered on the journey and here on the moon's surface. It wouldn't return; only the results of its sensory apparatus were returning now and would keep on returning until the rocket's power ran out.

The rocket was equipped with every kind of instrument — trackers, telemeters, and it was sending back sound and sight like a human eye and ear. Radar stations, television stations, G.E. wagons down there receiving information from the rocket . . .

The instructions told Barlow exactly where to stand so the television-eyes could pick up his image. He found himself leaning in using the kit, getting the radio apparatus out of his suit connected properly.

He was starting, making gestures, while the terrible fear of loneliness and isolation, his Achilles Heel, made the alien surroundings reel and slip and tremble as though at any moment he was going to crumble, fail, surrender.

The bleeding from his nose and ears had stopped. No pain; that wasn't the trouble. It was being alone, the idea of dying alone . . .

The bulbous suit carried him over the terrain. Clouds of pumice-dust drifted. He felt like an infant walking, his feet threatening to fold under him. The rocket seemed to be drawing him back toward it. It seemed warm and friendly as he walked the required distance away from it. On Earth they were seeing him now — a man on the moon where there should be no men. He would explain it to them; that was his job. To give them an explanation that would frighten them, freeze the inevitable war-drift for six months more. So the Brotherhood could act — the Brotherhood only needed time.

But what about Barlow? Sure, everybody had to die, but no one should have to die the way Barlow is being asked to. He couldn't do it!

But he stood there, and the rocket transmitted his image and his words back to the blockhouse at White Sands, New Mexico. He said, what the instructions told him to.

"We've been observing you; we saw the rocket coming in. You think you're the first to send a rocket here, but you're not. We've been here quite a while. Long enough to have set up a small colony. We've built a city near a uranium mine. There are large processing works, rocket installations and living quarters. There are atomic warhead rockets too . . ."

He stopped. His legs were weak, so much pressure for such light gravity . . .

. . . . rockets on the moon's dark side, out of your reach. But we can reach you. The world is just a target rotating beneath us. We have unlimited deposits of uranium and other radioactive metals; you are completely helpless. Any further attempts to come to the moon will meet with destruction. We will enforce peace if we can. Any indication down there of any power planning to start a war, and we'll send our own atomic warhead rockets down.

"We are primarily scientists and technicians. The annihilation of civilization would have been inevitable anyway, so we've nothing to lose by this last attempt to maintain peace by the only means left — by force. We'll bomb any power that attempts to launch atom bombs, or begins any form of military aggression. And remember — no more rockets to the moon!

"And who are we? WE are not America, Russia, France, Britain, Yugoslavia, China, Japan, Italy, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Canada, Texas, or any South American country. We are no country at all. We are of ALL countries. We are here to protect all countries from every other country, and we will try to do this by force if necessary. Remember — no more rockets to the moon. We will atom-bomb any nation attempting any form of military aggression.

THE BROTHERHOOD was very old, the outgrowth of an ancient Eastern philosophical cult of non-resistance and peace. With six months more, the Brotherhood could win the peace, maybe forever. If the speech just-made frightened the Americans enough, they wouldn't try anything. The only other powers that might start a war within six months were Russia, China, Yugoslavia. And they were too uncertain as to whether or not America had already reached the moon. Who controlled the Moon controlled Earth. They had been afraid for some time that perhaps America had already gotten to the moon. Mutual fear of retaliation had postponed the last war this long.

The Brotherhood knew social-psychology. They figured this would work.

Barlow felt himself backing away from the rocket. They were watching him, the rocket's eyes and ears. Taking his voice and image back to earth, back to voices and laughter and music and sound and warmth and women . . . with a sob, he twisted away from the rocket, turned, fell

to his thighs in thick pumice-dust, kept on struggling through lazy streaming dust ribbons and he didn't look back. He was watched; he mustn't look back at the rocket again.

Meteors exploded soundlessly on the beds of lava and seas of dust, shooting up thick motionless sprays that seemed almost solid. Above him, like splintered steel, stretched the thousands of feet of crater wall. He reached the sharp wall of rock, managed to get around it and out of sight of the rocket. He fell. He lay there, his suit blending with the cold and airless landscape.

He screamed. He clawed his way up, started back again, back toward the rocket. Hell with the Brotherhood. He was for Hal Barlow. Just for Hal Barlow. He'd tell the truth. It wouldn't be long then. They'd send other rockets up then. This was for Hal Barlow. The isolation pressed in, pressed him faster, throwing him crazily over the dust toward the rocket. Then they'd know the truth, send up other rockets, . . . not this way, with no more sounds, voices, any moving thing. No way for a man to die . . .

It wasn't death; it was the way of dying. No one should die this way — so alone. Especially Barlow, who feared loneliness more than anything else.

He fell. One foot slid into a crack filled with pumice dust fine as powder. He hooked the big steel hooks on the ends of his arms at the rock, and clung there, his helmet barely pushing up through the dust. He struggled for a while, desperately with his mind filling with visions of the rocket. He wanted to live now, make up for all the living he'd missed for so long.

He looked around, still struggling. Light gravity, little weight, but he was so weak now, and still the rocket wasn't in sight. He crawled on his stomach, dragging the bulbous suit over the rock. He could get around the rock. He had to. Out of sight, but so near, was the warm human rocket.

He ran into the rock and collapsed with a long wet sigh. He gasped. Pain throbbed damply over his chest. He moved . . . just enough to turn over on his back. He slid up a little so that he was sitting there staring at the frigid, barren, naked emptiness of utter silence and desolation. What had the man said? *"No man is alone who has learned the secret of oneness with the world . . . ?"*

He thought about the Brotherhood, seriously now, for the first time. Many men before him had died for it. An entirely new approach to society and the individual. Working from the inside out, there would

be more than a mere deflection of evil. There would be suppression at the source, in the individual will.

An end of national idolatry that threatened the existence of civilization. Man was superhuman in power and glory, subhuman in morality. After the spiritual revolution, never again the monstrous evils arising when remote abstractions like "nation" and "state" are regarded as realities more concrete and significant than human beings.

And no man is an island unto himself . . .

Unity . . .

He looked up. He saw the Earth then.

It shone down upon him through the Lunar night, twenty times brighter than moonlight. He felt warmth. There were faces in the shadows, hopeful women's faces and the eager innocent faces of children who had not yet learned hopelessness and hate. They might never learn it now.

He grinned. It was funny, you had to get so far away to look back and see all the people on earth as one, one face, one heart — one world — it looked like one world from here.

It wasn't cold as Barlow lay there and looked up at the bright shining disk. He closed his eyes. The Earthlight seemed to warm him, as the sunlight had once warmed him, long ago in childhood, on a lazy summer afternoon.



Sometimes worlds can meet without the inhabitants of either realizing. . . .

The Natives

by KATHERINE MACLEAN

THE old one said, "Stick close by me, child."

"What'll it be like, Grandpa?" The youngster was frightened.

"Dark, very dark, and big. It moves fast, but we'll keep up with it." The tone was consciously reassuring.

"Dark, Grandpa?"

"Yes, it sucks heat and absorbs light. You'll find out when you're old and strong enough to swim down to the bottom and see what's there. Now stay with me when we follow it, and don't get lost in the crowd; and don't get ahead of me or get too close to it — you might take in too much, and get overcharged."

"What's 'overcharged,' Grandpa? Can you really get too much?" The youngster jiggled up and down a little with excitement and anticipation.

For a moment, the oldster turned his attention from watching for the thing that was coming, and considered him fondly. "Poor youngling. I forget. You've had no chance to learn what it means to get enough. You're too young to ride the storms and tap the lightnings . . . Listen now. When a grownup has to let out a flash of blue light, that means that he's overcharged and spinning off balance inside, and so he has to save himself by letting out his energy to let down the pressure. So be careful; take enough, but don't be greedy and take in too much too suddenly. Now let's just float here with the others and be ready."

It was a beautiful bright day. The sun poured down its flood of light, here and there energizing a molecule of the blue air into little sparkles of ionization; and below, a mist of bright clouds half veiled the darkness that was the bottom.

"What's it mean when someone blinks blue light in lots of flashes, and then glows red and starts sinking, huh, Grandpa?"

"I'll tell you later when you're older. Just be careful and don't get too close." He was abruptly excited. "Here it comes!"

Out of the blue translucence far below, a black dot appeared and grew rapidly, rushing closer until it was a huge fish-shaped object with wide-

spread fins, rushing towards them. It would pass slightly to the left of them, and already the waiting crowd was moving to intercept it.

It flashed by, and the youngster thought they were going to lose it — it was going so much faster than they; but as the thought crossed his mind, and he saw the two churning glowing openings in its rear, a burning blast of energy struck him. A multitude of glowing, charged particles crackled around him, streamed against him. His fields shifted to reach out and capture them; the spin of stored energy within spun faster, absorbing the new energy into its drive, its life-pulse rising to a deep hum, and he felt strong, stronger than he had ever felt before in his life.

They were flying faster now, accelerating faster than he had ever flown, and it was easy. They drew up closer to the dark thing, matching it speed for speed, laving in the glowing cloud of energy-particles that roared backward from its jets. The youngster was astounded and exhilarated at the tremendous, effortless speed with which they were driving forward. This was the first time he had ever had so much power. It was ten times more than any aurora borealis with its pale wash of energy waves.

Drunken in his new found strength, he pulled ahead closer to the roaring jets.

AT THE peak of the arc of climb of the New York-Istanbul strato-liner, high in the ionosphere where the Earth was merely a giant globe far below, the pilot of the stratoliner boredly cut the jets for the fuel-saving glide that turned their nose toward Earth again.

The radar was clanging its usual senseless warning of imminent collision with some solid objects, which had approached closer than the automatic relays considered safe. It had been clanging for several minutes. The pilot glanced in annoyance at the radar screen, where several hundred globes — from two to seven feet in diameter — showed vividly, trailing the ship in a fan-shaped cluster. "Some day I'm going to take a hammer to that thing."

The co-pilot, looking back from the control blister's rear window, saw nothing, as usual, except a few of the shining globes, which showed themselves transiently in a brief flash of blue light as they carelessly overloaded and discharged — and one, smaller than the rest, who blinked on and off rapidly in brilliant flashes of blue. As he watched, it ran suddenly down the color-scale to red and began to lag behind, a glowing red globe, sinking.

"I wonder what the hell they think they're doing?" he grumbled.

A little whimsy, now and then, makes for good balance. Theoretically, you could find this type of humor anywhere. But only a topflight science-fictionist, we thought, could have written this story, in just this way. . . .

The Eyes Have It

by PHILIP K. DICK

IT WAS quite by accident I discovered this incredible invasion of Earth by lifeforms from another planet. As yet, I haven't done anything about it; I can't think of anything to do. I wrote to the Government, and they sent back a pamphlet on the repair and maintenance of frame houses. Anyhow, the whole thing is known; I'm not the first to discover it. Maybe it's even under control.

I was sitting in my easy-chair, idly turning the pages of a paperbacked book someone had left on the bus, when I came across the reference that first put me on the trail. For a moment I didn't respond. It took some time for the full import to sink in. After I'd comprehended, it seemed odd I hadn't noticed it right away.

The reference was clearly to a nonhuman species of incredible properties, not indigenous to Earth. A species, I hasten to point out, customarily masquerading as ordinary human beings. Their disguise, however, became transparent in the face of the following observations by the author. It was at once obvious the author knew everything. Knew everything — and was taking it in his stride. The line (and I tremble remembering it even now) read:

. . . his eyes slowly roved about the room.

Vague chills assailed me. I tried to picture the eyes. Did they roll like dimes? The passage indicated not; they seemed to move through the air, not over the surface. Rather rapidly, apparently. No one in the story was surprised. That's what tipped me off. No sign of amazement at such an outrageous thing. Later the matter was amplified.

. . . his eyes moved from person to person.

There it was in a nutshell. The eyes had clearly come apart from the rest of him and were on their own. My heart pounded and my breath choked in my windpipe. I had stumbled on an accidental mea-

tion of a totally unfamiliar race. Obviously non-Terrestrial. Yet, to the characters in the book, it was perfectly natural — which suggested they belonged to the same species.

And the author? A slow suspicion burned in my mind. The author was taking it rather *too easily* in his stride. Evidently, he felt this was quite a usual thing. He made absolutely no attempt to conceal this knowledge. The story continued:

... presently his eyes fastened on Julia.

Julia, being a lady, had at least the breeding to feel indignant. She is described as blushing and knitting her brows angrily. At this, I sighed with relief. They weren't *all* non-Terrestrials. The narrative continues:

... slowly, calmly, his eyes examined every inch of her.

Great Scott! But here the girl turned and stomped off and the matter ended. I lay back in my chair gasping with horror. My wife and family regarded me in wonder.

"What's wrong, dear?" my wife asked.

I couldn't tell her. Knowledge like this was too much for the ordinary run-of-the-mill person. I had to keep it to myself. "Nothing," I gasped. I leaped up, snatched the book, and hurried out of the room.

IN THE garage, I continued reading. There was more. Trembling, I read the next revealing passage:

... he put his arm around Julia. Presently she asked him if he would remove his arm. He immediately did so, with a smile.

It's not said what was done with the arm after the fellow had removed it. Maybe it was left standing upright in the corner. Maybe it was thrown away. I don't care. In any case, the full meaning was there, staring me right in the face.

Here was a race of creatures capable of removing portions of their anatomy at will. Eyes, arms — and maybe more. Without batting an eyelash. My knowledge of biology came in handy, at this point. Obviously they were simple beings, uni-cellular, some sort of primitive single-celled things. Beings no more developed than starfish. Starfish can do the same thing, you know.

I read on. And came to this incredible revelation, tossed off coolly by the author without the faintest tremor:

... outside the movie theater we split up. Part of us went inside, part over to the cafe for dinner.

Binary fission, obviously. Splitting in half and forming two entities.

Probably each lower half went to the cafe, it being farther, and the upper halves to the movies. I read on, hands shaking. I had really stumbled onto something here. My mind reeled as I made out this passage:

... I'm afraid there's no doubt about it. Poor Bibney has lost his head again.

Which was followed by:

... and Bob says he has utterly no guts.

Yet Bibney got around as well as the next person. The next person, however, was just as strange. He was soon described as:

... totally lacking in brains.

THERE was no doubt of the thing in the next passage. Julia, whom I had thought to be the one normal person, reveals herself as also being an alien lifeform, similar to the rest:

... quite deliberately, Julia had given her heart to the young man.

It didn't relate what the final disposition of the organ was, but I didn't really care. It was evident Julia had gone right on living in her usual manner, like all the others in the book. Without heart, arms, eyes, brains, viscera, dividing up in two when the occasion demanded. Without a qualm.

... thereupon she gave him her hand.

I sickened. The rascal now had her hand, as well as her heart. I shudder to think what he's done with them, by this time.

... he took her arm.

Not content to wait, he had to start dismantling her on his own. Flushing crimson, I slammed the book shut and leaped to my feet. But not in time to escape one last reference to those carefree bits of anatomy whose travels had originally thrown me on the track:

... her eyes followed him all the way down the road and across the meadow.

I rushed from the garage and back inside the warm house, as if the accursed things were following me. My wife and children were playing Monopoly in the kitchen. I joined them and played with frantic fervor, brow feverish, teeth chattering.

I had had enough of the thing. I want to hear no more about it. Let them come on. Let them invade Earth. I don't want to get mixed up in it.

I have absolutely no stomach for it.

(Continued from second cover)

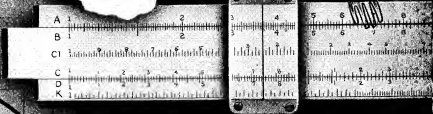
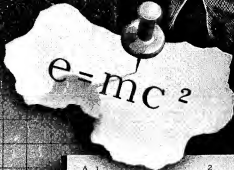
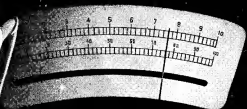
NOEL LOOMIS When an author applies his fertile imagination to backgrounds he knows well from personal experience, even so mundane a setting as a print-shop can furnish the background for a fascinating story. Noel Loomis, whose first novel, "Cities of Glass," appeared in 1942, knows his print-shops, and this is not the first time that they have appeared in his stories. However, no one has ever portrayed them in quite this fashion before; and, as for time-travel, since the theme is sheer fantastic speculation, Loomis' formulations are as sound as anyone else's. But his particular application of the time-travel theme remains unique.

KATHERINE MACLEAN In recent years, stories dealing with such "psychic" phenomena as telepathy, teleportation, and telekinesis have been frequent. Katherine MacLean was not the first to explore the scientific possibilities in these fields, but a number of her stories have dealt with them; and all have been unusual.

M. C. PEASE Many authors suddenly appear in science fiction magazines, with a short story, or a few short stories, and then disappear again as mysteriously as they came, leaving editors and readers alike wondering what happened. M. C. Pease started out in this fashion, but he didn't vanish from sight after his first stories, which were published in 1949. He came back, still stronger, with solid novelets such as the present one.

ROBERT SHECKLEY In 1951, Robert Sheckley sold his first story, a short tale entitled, "We Are Alone." It brought widespread cheers from hard-to-please readers. Six months later, young Sheckley was selling not only to all the science fiction and fantasy magazines, but also to "slick" publications. Now at the age of 25 (three years senior to Algis Budrys, by the way), Sheckley is giving the veteran authors a run for their money, and wondering if he can construct one of Mr. Loomis' time-travel gimmicks in order to keep up with the demand for his work.

BRYCE WALTON Late in 1944, an unusual short story entitled, "The Ultimate World," appeared in print, under the by-line of Bryce Walton. It was not long before the name became familiar to the magazine audience for science fiction, and Mr. Walton was doing feature novelets. His novel, "Sons of the Ocean Deep," was published by the John C. Winston Company, last year.



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